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HISTORY AND

JESUS HO ESCHATOS

A Study in the Problem of Correlation

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to discover and explore the nature of the relationship between history and eschatology, or more precisely, between the Jesus of history and Jesus ho Eschatos.

Two leading factors have determined the shape of this problem for contemporary theology. One is the tendency to abstract eschatology from history in too premature a fashion. The other is that eschatology is often virtually identified with history. It is against this broad background that our treatment of the problem may be viewed. An examination of some of the principal consequences implied by one or the other of these assumptions also forms part of our discussion. This is undertaken mainly in order to place the main subject of our discussion in clearer perspective. Secondly, it enables us to review, clarify and analyse the more distinctive alternatives to be found in this particular area of theological study.

The first chapter is devoted to a general discussion of some of the difficulties, opportunities and temptations presented to theology by relatively recent developments in the historical-critical study of the New Testament.

This sets the scene for Chapter Two, in which, with the help of some of the insights of R.G. Collingwood, the notion of history as the presence of the past is discussed and developed. It is argued that we

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recognise Jesus as ho Eschatos in his presence as paradigmatically personal. This also provides the basis for our tentative conclusions in the final chapter with regard to the problem of correlation.

In the following four chapters the different solutions to this problem are examined. In Chapter Three we present and analyse the position of the Consistent School. The extent to which Fritz Buri is dependent upon the findings of Albert Schweitzer is pointed out, and the difficulties of a position which severs the link between history and eschatology thus rendering the problem of correlation illusory, are discussed.

In Chapter Four, C.H. Dodd's Realised Eschatology is presented and evaluated. A number of criticisms of this view are offered. The most pertinent one, however, is that the problem of correlation is dissolved. History and eschatology are conflated in history, in 'the facts of the ministry of Jesus'.

In Chapter Five we discuss Oscar Cullmann's handling of the problem in terms of a Heilsgeschichte. It is argued that the possibility for a solution offered is open not only to the objection similar to that made of Dodd. It is also open to the objection that such a salvation-historical construction conspires to obscure the nature of the correlatives.

In Chapter Six, we deal with the position of Bultmann which in many ways is the most complex and difficult of all. However, it is suggested that as Bultmann finds any correlation between Jesus and ho Eschatos then it is one which can be effected only by a linguistic miracle and only at the expense of refusing to ask who Jesus is.

In the final chapter these criticisms are again taken up and discussed in the light of the principles outlined in Chapter Two. With the help of the category of the personal, it is argued, a form of correlation between history and eschatology may be discovered. Christ's personal

presence as paradigmatic enables us to catch a glimpse of him 'as he really is'. We conclude, therefore, that it is mistaken to suppose that we can never know him 'as he really was'.

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1971

PREFACE

There is a sense in which history may be regarded as all things to all men. Eschatology, likewise, has tended, more particularly, to become all things to all theologians. In contemporary theology there is very little critical agreement about either, and possibly even less about the nature of the correlation between them.

This lack of consensus, however, is not necessarily alarming or regrettable. If nothing else, a theologian's eschatology should enable him to live with it. And one possible test of it is the extent to which it will arouse his suspicion of solutions which purport to be total and final, especially theological ones.

Our object has been to explore the nature of the correlation between history and Jesus ho Eschatos. We have set ourselves the task of reviewing in historical-critical fashion the different solutions to this complex problem offered by some leading New Testament scholars. This has enabled us to trace the way in which the problem itself has been developed and how it has also been re-shaped by the various contributions which we have chosen to present and evaluate.

It is a relatively easy task to criticise the alternatives presented by others and simply leave it at that. There is also however, the much more temerarious task of pointing toward a way beyond them. With the help of R.G. Collingwood we have attempted to meet this requirement.

My indebtedness to those who have worked in this particular area of research is expressed at various points in the text. However, the organisation of this dissertation, its basic line of development, and the clarification and formulation of the problem under discussion are, to my knowledge, original contributions to this field of study.

I am deeply indebted to the late Professors Ronald Gregor Smith and Ian Henderson for their guidance and assistance both as teachers and as supervisors, and to Professor Allan Galloway for his considerate counsel and skill in supervision at a stage when this thesis was nearing completion. More personally, I thank my wife for her patience, help and constant encouragement.

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CHAPTER ONE : THE PLACE OF HISTORY

CHAPTER ONE

THE PLACE OF HISTORY

'Religion begins and ends with History.' ¹

In a number of recent theological writings it has frequently been observed that since the Enlightenment, and in particular since the advent of historical criticism in the nineteenth century, theology has come to understand its task to a very large extent as an engagement with some of the problems raised by historical science. However, it would be quite presumptuous to suggest that these problems are now settled, or to pretend that the engagement has always been a fruitful one. It might be truer to say rather that the engagement has been an uneasy one and has often taken the form of a protracted struggle. The assumption that one must subject the Bible to rigorous historical analysis free from dogmatic and authoritative presuppositions in the attempt to sift fact from myth, history from dogma, and what actually happened from later doctetic embellishments was viewed with considerable suspicion and even distaste by the ecclesiastical authorities. Their general response to the historical-critical method was cool indeed. They found it objectionable however, not so much because of its apparent historical scepticism, but because of what appeared to them to be a

¹ Schleiermacher, On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers, p.80.

determined refusal to believe, a refusal which the critics had raised to the status of a methodological principle.

The struggle continues, and more recently this kind of objection has again been voiced in a somewhat different form in the shape of an attack on Rudolf Bultmann's demythologising programme, which, in the opinion of those theologians who at that time represented the official theology of the church, constituted an attempt to deny the objective historicity of the events of revelation.¹ From within even more conservative circles than this there also emerges a very strong element of resistance.² New Testament scholars are divided on issues concerning inaccessibile verba. Form Critics are also divided when it becomes a question of deciding whether the method which they have adopted is strictly literary or whether on the basis of the same method one may also go on to make certain historical judgements, and finally, there are also those who would reject Form Criticism entirely, for reasons which, perhaps not surprisingly, echo the same nineteenth century objections to the historical-critical method.

Random examples such as these may at least serve to indicate that theology has not yet quite recovered from the impact of the

¹Cf. e.g. Friedrich Gogarten's discussion in Demythologising and History, ch.7, pp. 39ff.

²Gerhard Ebeling quotes Erwin Reiserer, who writes (1947): 'Till now - at least in the last two centuries - the truth of revelation has been subordinated to the judgement of historical science. It was considered right, often in fact even obligatory, to subject the sacred traditions to rational criticism and measure them by the standards which the autonomous mind had set up for its own purposes. Even theology itself, especially the theology of the more recent Protestant schools, has displayed and for the most part still displays this questionable scientific ambition. One could often almost say: it finds vindication at the bar of science more important than vindication before God.' (Word and Faith, pp. 18-19).

nineteenth century historical-critical study of the Bible and its discoveries about the historical origins of Christianity. No doubt it is true that some of the problems then raised have become less burdensome, with the discovery and admission, for instance, that such an eminent and respectable historian as St. Luke may have mistakenly adapted certain information concerning a census ordered by Augustus, or that there are such things as mythological and legendary elements in the biblical material. Of course not everyone can accept even this minimal core of critical discovery, and among those who do, the further questions which such discoveries imply are by no means at rest. The question concerning the place of history remains, and is one which in more recent years has tended to resolve itself into a not unfriendly controversy between those who adopt the view that faith cannot be dependent upon the probabilities of historical research, and those who would prefer to say that faith must take the risk of all the problems and ambiguities of history.

However, before we come to one, or both, or neither of these conclusions, the question may be sensibly asked as to why the theologian should think that he has any business with history at all. Is it not the case that no matter how hard he may try his historical brains he shall not gain a deity? Perhaps, but this does not necessarily mean that he should not be permitted to entertain the much less Faustian thought that there may be some historical methods, and certain understandings of history which are more compatible with his task than others.

After attempting to answer the question why the theologian should take history seriously, we shall then proceed to outline one view of history which may possibly meet his requirements. This will

at the same time enable us to place our problem within a fairly wide setting, so that we may then go on to consider and question at some length the views of a selected number of scholars who have concerned themselves with the problem of the historical Jesus in relation to eschatology.

I

The theologian is concerned with history for a number of different reasons, but strictly speaking, history becomes something inescapable because of the fact that Christianity, as distinct from something thought or from a system of ideas, is essentially an historical religion. However, to say this again takes one little farther than the stating of the problem since such a statement is also open to a very wide variety of interpretations. It can mean that Christianity has a history, like democracy, trade-unionism or golf. Defined as historical in this sense, Christianity may be studied and examined like any other historical phenomenon, in terms of its origin and expansion and its effects upon and contribution to different cultures. However, when the theologian asserts that Christianity is an historical religion, and although in an apologetic mood he may well wish to convey such a meaning as this, he usually means something rather different. And if he does, then the statement that Christianity is an historical religion will involve a paradox. To quote Gerhard Ebeling:

'Christianity stands or falls with the tie that binds it to its unique historical origin. That means first of all: Christianity is a historic (geschichtlich) phenomenon. It derives from a definite historical past and therefore stands in historical relation to that past. But the proposition that Christianity stands or falls with the tie that binds it to its historical origin means much more than that. It contains an assertion

which is paradoxical in comparison with all other phenomena in history ... That is, the historical origin of Christianity is assigned the character of revelation. It is thereby withdrawn from the relativity and transience of all historic events ... The event in question is one which, although it is attested as a unique historical event and as such belongs to a definitely fixed past, nevertheless does not become a thing of the past but has a constant present quality. The historical Jesus of Nazareth is proclaimed as the present Lord exalted to the right hand of God, the work wrought in his suffering, dying and rising again is proclaimed as the salvation that is wrought for all time and therefore always present.¹

This essential paradox may be expressed in different ways.

It may be said, for example, that in Jesus Christ God has become historical, or has entered history, or that the revelation to which Christianity lays claim is intimately and irrevocably bound up with certain specific historical events. Having a history of its own, the paradox may be viewed in relation to its historic formulations, in its classic Johannine form of 'the Word became flesh', in terms of the Reformation distinction between historia profana and historia sacra, between history and eternal happiness (Kierkegaard), between penultimate and ultimate (to transpose the ethical terminology of Bonhoeffer), or between religious doctrines which are at the same time historical events (Herbert Butterfield). But in preference to any of these formulations the paradox may for our present purposes be most adequately expressed in the terms of Bultmann who would rather say that this historical event is at the same time the eschatological event,² which, being interpreted, we may take to mean that the Christ-

¹G. Ebeling, Word and Faith, pp. 28-29.

²Cf. e.g. Geschichte und Eschatologie im Neuen Testament, in Glauben und Verstehen, Vol. III, pp. 105-106, and repeatedly elsewhere.

event is paradoxical in the sense that not only is his action the action of an historical man, it is simultaneously the action of God, or that the action of Jesus is at the same time God's action, the action of he Eschatos.¹

Whether the theologian may now go on to claim with any justification that in and through this event the meaning of history is disclosed, or that in this event history has come to an end, as Bultmann for example does, are problems which may be dealt with below.

The centre of the problem is therefore how an historical event can at the same time be said to be an eschatological event, and here we return to the theologian's predicament, for there are some preliminary difficulties which have yet to be overcome. One of the principal problems with which he is confronted is that of working out a fruitful method of interpreting the particular event with which he is concerned, and as has already been pointed out, there are some methods which may be more to his advantage than others by means of which he may be enabled to offer a reasonably coherent presentation of this event. On the other hand, the historian qua historian may detect no problem at all in this matter. For purely methodological reasons, historians must exclude any notion of an eschatology or of the action of God from their presuppositions about the subject matter with which they are concerned.

¹In the New Testament this term has an ambiguity, and for that reason a flexibility which for the time being we should prefer to retain. Our own use of the term is not confined to what may be based upon the teaching of those passages where it is explicitly used (1 Cor. 15:45). For further remarks on the use of the term see especially Chapter Two, Part III. The flexibility of the term also allows us to examine the different ways in which our problem has been formulated in more recent times.

For the theologian the problem is again rather more complex. For although he may have to make certain judgements about the historical method which he proposes to adopt and about which historical methodology will prove to be best suited to his specific task, he still has to face the question whether, having decided to adopt this or that particular method, anything is actually gained for theology. He may discover, as some do, that no historical method, no matter how precise and subtle, can evoke faith,¹ and he may also discover that his historical findings can in no way substantiate the eschatological claim which he wishes to make for the event with which he is dealing, or which the event makes for itself. On the other hand, and page Kierkegaard, if Christianity, or eschatology, is not to be arbitrarily and prematurely sundered from its historical basis, then its correspondence with an actual historical mode of life or action must either be real or will have to be invented.

Nevertheless, despite this dilemma, part of the theologian's task is to make as clear as possible what faith is, and in his search for a suitable historical method the problems can be more adequately indicated. And in this search, the theologian may also be able to point to the place where faith does become a genuine choice and not a spurious one between certain types of historical method, and also to the fact that faith need not automatically deny what the historian is attempting to affirm, as was frequently the case in the nineteenth century and in certain contemporary circles still is. To this search we may now turn.

¹Or as Kierkegaard puts it: 'Faith cannot be distilled from even the nicest accuracy of detail.' (Philosophical Fragments, p.130.)

II

A number of modern historians and philosophers of history have suggested definitions of history which are generally fairly flexible and which can be of some service to the theologian in clarifying his problems. The definition of history as the science of the past is generally regarded as no longer tenable, though in pointing this out it is seldom recognised that those historians who worked on the basis of this definition, or a similar one, had a remarkable respect for the past with which they were concerned, and were not afraid of the often wearisome task of sorting out the dust of small facts. However, if there is such a thing as a science of history at all, then it is one which is in continual motion. The past is not a pillar of salt, and it has come to be understood that the subject matter of history is not something which can be sealed off in an objective way and examined in the comparatively peaceful atmosphere of the laboratory.

According to one definition the subject matter of history is man himself.¹ But it may also be recalled that inevitably the Greeks had very much the same word for it. According to Herodotus, history is concerned

'with the things done by men ... to the end that they should not be forgotten with the passage of time and that the great and marvellous exploits, performed by both Greeks and Barbarians, should not lose their radiance.'²

¹ Marc Bloch, The Historian's Craft, p.11.

² Quoted by Bloch, *op.cit.*, p.60.

However, despite a certain amount of substantial agreement between Herodotus and Bloch, it is to R.G. Collingwood, whose definition of history is essentially the same, that we turn. Collingwood writes:

'What kind of things does history find out? I answer, res gestae: actions of human beings that have been done in the past.'¹

A definition such as this immediately raises some extremely acute and difficult problems for theology. If the historian deals with the actions of men in the past then why should theology concern itself with history? Collingwood himself does suggest that theological thinking cannot apprehend the past 'because the object of that kind of thinking is a single infinite object, and historical events are finite and plural.'²

At first sight it may simply appear that Collingwood is taking up the cause of those of his colleagues who find the statements of theologians about what history really is and about what therefore historians really ought to be doing somewhat tiresome. However this may be, his definition of history is at least partly acceptable to theology in the sense that the proper sphere of theology is not primarily history, that is, the res gestae, or the actions of men in general. Nevertheless, theology may express only a qualified agreement with such a view, for it certainly is concerned with the res gestae Dei (or deorum), or with the actions of God, which, at least as far as Christianity is concerned, are by no means independent of history.

¹The Idea of History, p.9.

²Op.cit., p.5.

And a qualified consent to such a position it must also remain, for if the attempt is made to resolve the paradox solely in terms of its historical pole, God having been conveniently set aside, the result will then be some form of Ebionism, or a perhaps more Jesucentric than Christocentric Humanism, of which present-day theology can offer a sufficient number of examples. And on the other hand, if theology is permitted to sever its bond with history and endeavours to treat the paradox purely in terms of its divine side, then it may justifiably be charged with propagating diffuse abstractions, with constructing barren metaphysical theories, or, less seriously, with Docetism.

Simple as it may be to exclude any excessive intrusions into a proper christology from any of these directions, it is not always so easy to exclude them entirely. The difficulty of doing so is all the more acute for those who are unable to rest content with the flat reiteration of orthodox propositions. It may be argued that the authoritative statements of orthodoxy are sufficient of themselves to conceal most of these problems. This however is only an appearance, and it is precisely because of an increased awareness of the historical nature of all our thinking that we now tend to regard it as such. This awareness has not only made it impossible to let such statements go unquestioned. It has also enabled the critic of Christianity to be much more adept in the detection of those weaknesses to which theology, especially in this particular area, is heir.

In addition to this, according to the contemporary Zeitgeist, the theologian is no longer permitted the luxury of an Idealism (such as that of Collingwood) to which he may turn for shelter. The pressing

temptation to flee to the supra-historical, or, as Reinhold Niebuhr has said, to take an elevator to the eternal, may have lost some of its attraction, but it nevertheless remains a temptation at least for those who can continue to cherish the belief that the elevator may still be there to take. The alternative is to feel tempted to believe that safety is to be found in a certain aggregate of historically verifiable Heilstatssachen, the number of which may vary according to theological taste. If both of these ways would seem to be closed for the time being, then theology, as far as this particular problem is concerned, is left in the somewhat unenviable, and to many theologians, agonising predicament, of seeking to grope after a new metaphysic, or of attempting to come to grips with the problem with the help of an understanding of history which will enable it to do full justice to the paradox without either distorting or altogether eliminating its essential tension.

It would be foolish to pretend that this latter course is simple, or even to suggest that it may involve fewer difficulties than those which are to be met with elsewhere. However, if one may borrow Paul van Buren's metaphor, it may nevertheless be possible to undertake a tentative exploration in this direction, and perhaps also make some equally tentative suggestions as to which paths may be most profitably followed once that temporary destination has been reached.¹

Therefore, despite the difficulties involved, and in the hope that they will be squarely met rather than shirked, our first question must be to ask what sort of understanding of history will prove to be of most help if justice is still to be done to the paradox, or if the

¹P. van Buren, Theological Explorations, pp. 3-13.

eschatological event is not to be prematurely abstracted^t from its historical eventfulness in ho Eschaton.

This is one of the many ways in which the nature of the problem under discussion may be described. This, and some of the principal implications of certain proffered solutions to this problem will be the subject upon which we shall endeavour to concentrate in the following chapters.

We have already chosen Bultmann's way of formulating the problem as most suitable for our purpose in this study. This is not to indicate that we simply wish to endorse, or at this stage make an effort to justify his own idiosyncratic solution to this problem. While we shall certainly have occasion to be grateful for many of his insights, this mode of formulation has been chosen primarily for its practical value as giving shape to the subject of the present study, and also because it provides a useful focus to which many of the sub-problems surrounding this theme may be continually referred.

Our problem then may be said to be one of correlation between history and eschatology, between the Jesus of history and ho Eschaton, or, since this last term is sufficiently flexible to include Bultmann's own formulation, our task will be to discover the nature of the correlation between the Jesus of history and the Christ of the kerygma.

The present study is undertaken in the belief that, for reasons which it is hoped will emerge in the course of the following chapter, it is both a requirement and a possibility that such a correlation or continuity should exist. As we shall also see, however, there appear to be equally powerful and even much more powerful opinions to the contrary. In order to meet such objections part of the task of the

following chapter will also be to determine with some more precision what the nature of this alleged correlation may be.

For help in this direction, and despite Collingwood's warnings about the legitimate scope of theology, it is to his work that we propose to return and to ask to what extent some of his further remarks on the problem of historical understanding can help to clarify our problem, and to discover to what extent his understanding of history may be fruitful for theology.

After the chapter on Collingwood, the following four chapters will be devoted to studies of the work of Albert Schweitzer, C.H. Dodd, Oscar Gullmann and Rudolf Bultmann who have each made quite decisive if very different contributions to the problem under discussion.

This particular selection is made since these scholars all work primarily within the field of New Testament. For this reason the selection is not an arbitrary one. It is also made because each in his own way has taken up a fairly definitive position with regard to the problem which we intend to examine. Such a selection is of course also necessary in order to limit to some extent the boundaries of our own discussion.

In the concluding chapter I shall re-assemble some of the problems which have been encountered along the way. In the final chapter I shall also indicate some answers to the questions which these problems have raised. These proposed solutions will be closely

related to the understanding of history which we intend to outline in the following chapter.¹

¹It will be seen from the following chapter that our concern is primarily with history and the problem of the presence of the past. Because of the proposed limits of our thesis, because of the fact that for the above-mentioned scholars the problem of correlation between history and eschatology (or revelation) may be said to be essentially the same, and since we are concerned with this particular view of history and not so much with history as the rather apocalyptic 'future of the past' (Moltmann, Theologie der Hoffnung, 1965), we shall not, despite its many merits, devote a separate extended section to Moltmann's position. It may be said in addition that Moltmann's problem of correlation is not ours in the sense that except by implication, he has little to say about the Jesus of history/Christ of faith debate as such. However, it is also the case that his own view possibly involves the immediate transposition of this problem into a different key. That is to say, if we deny the significance of the past for the present and thereby also deny the present for the sake of the future (as Moltmann's view of history would seem to suggest), the problem is then to discover some correlation between present (Gospel) and future (Promise). On the other hand there may well be no problem here for Moltmann at all for at times we get the impression from his analysis that Gospel and Promise coalesce in their purely future reference in Promise alone thus leaving the present empty.

CHAPTER TWO : THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY AND THE PROBLEM OF THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST

With the help of some of R.G. Collingwood's insights we may now go on and attempt the rather difficult if not perilous task of outlining an approach to history and an understanding of history which can possibly be of some considerable value for theology, and which at the same time can be of some help to us in pointing toward a way of coming to grips with and defining the relationship between history and eschatology with particular reference in this context to the Christ-event.

This is to state the purpose of the present study in the broadest terms. We may now attempt to define this purpose more closely and as briefly as possible. We shall borrow the distinction which Collingwood makes between the 'outside' and the 'inside' of historical events. With the help of this distinction, and after having examined how both 'outside' and 'inside' are interrelated, we shall then go on to examine the way in which history can be correlated with the claim that Jesus is the Christ or he Eschatos.

Our entire discussion will therefore also involve an examination and evaluation of one of the most pressing of current theological problems, namely, the debate about whether faith requires the support of certain historical facts, a 'minimal core of factuality',¹ or whether

¹The phrase is John Macquarrie's. Cf. An Existentialist Theology, pp. 159-192, and also The Scope of Demythologising, pp. 245-248.

it really requires none and is solely dependent upon and nourished by a historically disembodied Christus praesens who would appear to be quite free from the embarrassment of historical facts and historical particularity with which he may be said neither to collide nor be confused.

For convenience, and in the interest of clarity, the present chapter may be divided into three sections:

- I The Presence of the Past
- II The Claim of the Past
- III The Past and the Problem of Einnaligkeit.

I

THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST

There are two passages in Collingwood's The Idea of History which form the centre around which much of his discussion turns.

The first of these runs as follows:

'Historical knowledge is the knowledge of what mind has done in the past, and at the same time it is the re-doing of this, the perpetuation of past acts in the present. Its object is therefore not a mere object, something outside the mind which knows it; it is an activity of thought, which can be known only in so far as the knowing mind re-enacts and knows itself as so doing. To the historian, the activities whose history he is studying are not spectacles to be watched, but experiences to be lived through in his own mind; they are objective, or known to him, only because they are also subjective, or activities of his own.'¹

The second passage is closely related to this one. Collingwood writes:

'The historian, investigating any event in the past, makes a distinction between what may be called the outside and the inside of an event. By the outside of an event I mean everything

¹The Idea of History, p.218.

belonging to it which can be described in terms of bodies and their movements: the passage of Caesar, accompanied by certain men, across a river called the Rubicon at one date ... By the inside of the event I mean that in it which can only be described in terms of thought: Caesar's defiance of Republican law ... The historian is never concerned with either of these to the exclusion of the other ... His work may begin by discovering the outside of an event, but it can never end there; he must always remember that the event was an action, and that his main task is to think himself into this action, to discern the thought of its agent.¹

Our concern here is not primarily to present an exhaustive critique of Collingwood's philosophy of history, nor even to provide a detailed commentary on these passages which are so basic to his whole position, but rather to examine some of his insights against the background of the wider question with which he is dealing, namely, the question of history as the presence of the past, and to discover the extent to which these insights may, with some modification, point to an understanding of history which may prove useful not only as a means of clarifying the principal issues which our problem involves, but which may also point toward a possible, if tentative, approach to a solution. At this stage, however, some general and preliminary comments are required before proceeding further.

For various reasons a number of critics have taken exception to Collingwood's theory of history,² and there can be very little doubt

¹The Idea of History, p.213.

²The main criticisms are concisely summed up in W.H. Walsh's An Introduction to Philosophy of History, pp. 52-55. Walsh notes three principal objections to Collingwood's theory of history as the history of thought and as involving the re-enactment of past thought: 1. The materialist objection that such a theory cannot take the natural background to historical events into account; 2. That his theory does not allow for the less deliberate or unintentional actions which may be said to 'make' history; 3. His theory may cover biography, military and political history, but not, for example, economic history. Walsh defends Collingwood's theory against these objections, and in doing so he also defends the basic distinction which Collingwood makes between the 'outside' and the 'inside' of events. However, Walsh rejects Collingwood's view that to penetrate behind historical phenomena involves a special act of intuitive insight, cf. pp. 57-58.

that few contemporary philosophers would consider it an essential or even appropriate part of their avocation to defend him.¹ The same would however be equally true of some of the more radically disposed theologians. From the post Form-critical theological perspective Collingwood's views concerning, for example, history as the re-enactment of past thought, would appear to be even more untenable. The more thoroughgoing scholars of this persuasion would of course suggest that because of the very nature of the Gospels and of the New Testament as a whole, it is quite impossible to determine generally let alone to any exact degree what Jesus thought, and consequently equally if not more impossible to re-think or re-enact his thoughts. At the same time this is a judgement which would appear to be made without any reference to the more agonisingly complex philosophical problem of 'other minds' and knowledge of them.

Taken piece by piece and au pied de la lettre, it can certainly be shown that Collingwood's theory is not only at certain points philosophically deficient, but also theologically less helpful than one might at first suppose. Nevertheless, our principal concern in this context is with his more general yet quite fundamental distinction between 'outside' and 'inside', and it is to the implications of the spirit of this distinction, if not the letter, that we shall now turn

¹ For further criticisms of Collingwood's position, cf. e.g., H.A. Hodges, The Philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey, p. 336; T.A. Roberts, History and Christian Apologetic, pp. 3-21.

and attempt to discover whether with some necessary modification, it may still prove to be a valid and useful one.

The wider issue then with which Collingwood is dealing is the problem of history as the presence of the past, and it is being suggested here that it is within the context of this specific problem that the 'outside'/'inside' distinction is valid, and can be defended as being a useful description of what men actually do when they find themselves confronted by a particular set of historical facts or by some specific historical event. It is the kind of distinction which provides the framework which is pre-supposed when, for example, we read a report about the assassination of a President of the United States, or reports about skirmishes on the Sino-Soviet frontier, and are prompted to ask such questions as: What is behind this event? or even the question, however odd it may be: What is the Kremlin thinking? And it is a fact that men persist in asking questions like these despite the fact that they are well aware that the answers to them are not readily available.

Nevertheless, this is the kind of procedure which represents the attempt to move from the external to the internal dimension of any event, or in terms of Collingwood's theory, from the record of bare facts to the thought and intention of the agents involved. No doubt such a procedure has its problems, but despite the warnings of the philosophers that overt actions are not to be understood as clues to the mental workings behind them, but are themselves those workings,¹ it can be suggested that for historians, and equally for those who take an intelligent interest in the affairs and events of the world,

¹E.g., Gilbert Ryle, The Concept of Mind, p. 58. See also W.H. Walsh, An Introduction to Philosophy of History, p. 55.

the distinction need not necessarily be so misleading.

It is certainly true however, that it is notoriously difficult to establish the actual motives and thoughts behind certain historical actions. This is so because in many cases the lack of sufficient relevant evidence often makes it impossible to make relatively safe judgements, let alone reach final conclusions. Such an enterprise is also fraught with difficulty because historical agents frequently accomplish much more than they actually thought or intended. It appears equally hazardous when we consider that some men have 'made' history without intending to do so.

The search for motives or intentions behind overt actions is, for these reasons alone, a dubious enough pursuit. Nevertheless, there is also a sense in which those who do ask such a question as, What is behind this or that action or event? may not in fact be searching for demonstrable motives at all. This need not be the questioner's primary concern. His question may indicate something rather different. It can indicate the attempt to come to grips with those events which either do not immediately fit, or cannot be easily integrated into the total situation of the questioner's life and experience. In this case, the question expresses the attempt to discover some means by which the question-raising event itself may be comprehended and explained. In this situation it is unlikely that an explanation of the event in terms of cause and effect will satisfy the questioner. He is more concerned to understand events of this kind in terms of his own understanding of himself and his world, and in relation to his own urge to give, or even impose, a meaning on that world. Here again then, the 'inside'/'outside' distinction, though it may not be exact,

is helpful as a description of what as a matter of fact men actually do.

The distinction would therefore imply that there are at least two basic ways in which any historical event may be viewed. There is a 'looking at', and a 'looking with' or 'looking through'. The distinction is not a Manichaean one. It does not imply that there are two types of history, one of which is true and the other false. It does not mean that 'outside' and 'inside' are mutually exclusive. However, neither is the one entirely reducible to the terms of the other. Or, as Collingwood says, referring to the 'outside'/'inside' distinction: 'The historian is never concerned with either of these to the exclusion of the other.'¹

For these reasons the distinction may be defended and retained. The problem is now to discover the dynamic connection between 'outside' and 'inside' in the historical present. In order to do so, we must attempt to avoid the theoretical subterfuge of a duplex usus historiae of the kind which is notable for its manifold duplicity rather than its dialectical capacity.

At a quite fundamental level, it might be asked why it is that certain historical events should concern us. A quite simple answer to this question might be that the participation of these events in our present is occasioned not only by the kinds of questions we want to ask concerning them, but by the sort of questions they raise for us. Some events of themselves raise questions, and certain specific kinds of questions, more readily than others, as do for example the events of the life and death of apparently just men such as Socrates, or more recently perhaps, President Kennedy. Events such as these would thus appear to have something to say to the present. However,

¹The Idea of History, p.213

as Collingwood suggests, before any event can break silence and speak to the present, it has to be viewed not only in terms of its 'outside'. To do so would be to examine it one-sidedly and to seek to comprehend it in terms of its more quantitative proportions. What this particular approach thus requires is that precedence be given to the external and objective factors which constitute any given event, factors including times, dates, places, numbers and movements, all of which can be calculated, recorded, compiled and if necessary reiterated or re-told, all of which can in principle be established with accuracy.

According to Collingwood then, the 'inside' of any event can never be disclosed by means of this approach alone, although such an approach can never be entirely excluded.

At this point we must attempt to clarify one particular aspect of Collingwood's distinction. It should be noted that from the standpoint of a later age, that which would have originally constituted the 'inside' of any event of the past is often seen to have become part of its 'outside'. Whether Collingwood himself intended to suggest this is not clear. However, the distinction which he makes must be extended in order to make this point. When we now refer to the 'outside' of a past event we are, for one thing, giving some indication of the inevitable distance in time which separates that event from the present. More important than this is that fact that we are also referring to the distance and difference between ourselves and the ways in which men understood and expressed themselves in the past in relation to their world and the events of their world. In this sense the 'inside' can become problematic, even foreign.

Certain past explanations of past events are naturally strange

to us since they presuppose an understanding of the world which in the present we can no longer share. They have lost their immediacy and are no longer integral to the way in which we understand ourselves in the present, nor to our present and however fragmentary understanding of our own world. This then is to suggest that to any event of the past there also belongs its 'world', the historical, cultural and metaphysical nexus or context in relation to which events were grasped and understood, and in terms of which they were explained. These were once constitutive of the 'inside' of events. To a later observer however, this 'world' may appear as external for the reason that it is no longer his own.

These are a few of the factors which have to be taken into consideration in any discussion of the problem of history as the presence of the past, and this last point provides an opportunity to examine one possible misinterpretation of this extension and adaptation of Collingwood's position. It is of particular significance with regard to those who might wish to invoke his references to re-enactment to support their view that re-enactment is essentially the uncritical attempt to re-present the past in such a way as to neutralise its strangeness. The most obvious way in which this may appear to be accomplished is by means of an uncritical and self-abnegating identification. The purpose of this exercise is to make the past present. Paradoxically, however, what is achieved is exactly the opposite and the result is often in fact rather theatrical.

The belief that direct identification with, or imitation of, figures or actions of the past is possible is often becomingly eccentric. However, it can also be a rather dangerous belief. This is the case

especially if the belief requires that we should 'fall under the spell' of some historical agent, or if it requires that we should adopt an attitude of passive surrender to the mystique of a particular historical era and the power of its world-view. All this may give rise to dangerous illusions. The worst, however, which may usually be said of those who do attempt to identify themselves with the past in this way is that they are 'living in the past'.¹

Thus however close to the 'inside' of an event an approach such as this may appear to penetrate, it actually permits the eventfulness or 'happenedness' of that event to be submerged for the sake of the 'world' in terms of which it was objectively expressed. And with its insistence upon the transposition or transference of the self into a world which is no more, it also demands a denial of the present for the sake of that past world, which if accepted and assimilated uncritically still remains an essential constituent of the 'outside' of that event.

To return however to Collingwood's more precise understanding of the nature of past events and the sense in which these events are also present, the position which he is criticising is not so much this, but rather the sufficiency of the subject/object schema as historically applied, and its alleged competence to solve this particular problem

¹ This is what R. Gregor Smith in a slightly different context has called 'the fallacy of immediacy'. See Secular Christianity, p.79.

We may also note here that this spurious understanding of Vergangenheitsbewältigung or similar versions of it, is not unrelated to the views of some scholars and critics who, regarding the way in which the New Testament should be interpreted, would suggest that in order to understand it and the events with which it deals, one would ideally require the mind of a first-century hellenised Jew. Apart from the problem of the actual practicability of such a suggestion, it is one which would in fact constitute the ultimate hermeneutical impassé if it were to be taken with any real seriousness. We may also note here that this is one of the problems which lies at the root of Oscar Cullmann's treatment of the issue under discussion and which we shall have occasion to deal with below. It is of course questionable whether a first-century hellenised Jew would have understood Cullmann!

with the somewhat simplistic assertions that history is an object to be contemplated from a secure distance, that 'facts speak for themselves', and that historical events can therefore be said to be present in terms of a certain sum of established and agreed facts about them. And yet a further criticism which he wants to make in this connection is concerned with the ideal which the exponents of this particular method strive to realise: that by means of the painstaking collection and arrangement of facts, any particular event or series of events can in principle be reconstructed in such a way as finally to constitute a self-explanatory unity; an ideal which in turn also implies that historical epochs, events or any given series of events, are in principle exhaustible, that the historical mine may be abandoned when the deposits have eventually run out. Of course, those who want to claim validity for this method would not deny that with the emergence of fresh sources and data of other kinds, the historian must always be under the obligation to revise his estimates. Nevertheless, this does not in any way affect the main thesis that in principle, any given historical chapter can be closed, and that there come times when the prospector must move to more productive fields.

This is simply to analyse and at the same time to emphasise Collingwood's point that 'the activities whose history he (the historian) is studying are not spectacles to be watched, but experiences to be lived through ...'¹

¹ The Idea of History, p.218. A similar view is taken by Friedrich Gogarten in his De-mythologising and History where he refers to the spectator's attitude to history 'in which the spectator holds himself aloof from history, or is under obligation to remain as aloof as possible'. p.27.

The historian of this particular methodological persuasion might feel moved to protest that this description is really a caricature of his position, and to support his protest he may further argue that the subject/object framework is sufficiently flexible to permit a certain measure of involvement with or sympathy toward the historical matter which constitutes the object of his research. It is questionable, however, whether it is really flexible enough. For, even as involved or as sympathetic, the subject would still be the one who continues to control, determine and even dominate, so that if the subject/object framework can justifiably be said to make any such concession at all, then the favour which it bestows accrues to the advantage of the subject alone,¹ or to adapt a statement of H.G. Gadamer, history belongs to the subject, not the subject to history.²

Despite these few but serious reservations concerning the adequacy of this method it is nevertheless necessary to emphasise again that there cannot be any genuine historical study without research into the 'outside' of events. To ignore external history would be to place historical interpretation and understanding on a level with literary criticism, or infinitely much worse, it would be to reduce it to some kind of pneumatic Schwärmerei, the concern of which is primarily to sever every contact with historical reality in its determined refusal to submit to any kind of empirical check.

¹ It may be this peculiar partiality toward the subject which has provided the occasion for the suggestion that we should not study history, but that we should study historians.

² Wahrheit und Methode, p. 261. See also The New Hermeneutic, p. 70. (New Frontiers in Theology, Vol. II, edited by J.M. Robinson and J.B. Cobb.)

On the other hand however, it is not enough merely to establish the fact of the 'outside' of any event¹, nor, in order to break the inflexibility of the subject/object frame of reference, is it sufficient to concede that in the light of new data and with the emergence of new sources, the historian must be engaged in a perpetual revision of his judgements. For what would count most decisively against this method is its insensitivity to the fact that historical events are not simply objects in the past, but that they also have a future, that is to say, as raising questions or claims of one kind or another, they are already established and exist in a living connection with the historical present. Thus any attempt to seal off the past, or any event of the past, as an object, not only renders this living connection innocuous, but the past speechless.

Rudolf Bultmann, whose understanding of history in some ways resembles that of Collingwood, states this as follows:

'It is not at all 'in themselves', nor yet as links in a casual chain, that events and historical figures may be said to be historic (*geschichtliche*) phenomena. They are historic only in relation to their future, for which they have meaning and for which the present bears responsibility. It may therefore be said that to each historical phenomenon there belongs its own future, a future in which alone it shows itself for what it is.'²

This suggestion would seem to be one which in practice Bultmann himself

¹Carl Michalson is close to the position being defended here when he writes: '... the factuality of an event cannot be established without suspending its meaningfulness. One cannot simultaneously examine an eyeball and discern the meaning which that eye is embodying. One cannot at one and the same time look at and through a window pane ... In a similar way, to establish historical factuality requires one to stand in clinical detachment, outside the very meaning which gives the history its status as history.' *Worldly Theology*, pp. 79-80.

²*Glauben und Verstehen*, Vol.III, p. 113.

has tended to disregard. Nevertheless, it does help to clarify Collingwood's basic distinction between 'outside' and 'inside', and does so also by attempting to overcome the more obviously idealist (or intuitive) connotations of Collingwood's own position. Thus if the following interpretation of Bultmann's statements is correct, and if a future is integral to every historical event to a greater or lesser extent, then it may be said that the past is not simply present as our possession of a certain aggregate of facts or information about it, nor perhaps even as a theory or explanation of the past, and least of all as a pale reproduction of wie es eigentlich gewesen. It is present rather as a claim upon the present, and as a claim in which (to return to Collingwood's distinction) 'outside' and 'inside' are essentially compresent or coincide. Therefore as constitutive of historical events, their future impinges upon the historical present in this way, so that perhaps somewhat loosely speaking, historical events can be said to possess an inherently 'natural eschatology'.

It has purposely been stated that a future is integral to historical events 'to a greater or lesser extent'. This is intended as a modification of Bultmann's remarks, and it has also been stated specifically in order to avoid the more luxuriant version of the idealist view put forward by Croce, namely, that all history is present or contemporary history, a view which to its distinct advantage enables him to speak of one kind of history and not two. However, by way of qualification it may be pointed out that, although the position being argued for here comes close to this in many respects, it cannot be said that all history is present history, though it may perhaps be so

potentially or latently. This necessary qualification does not imply that a theory of two types of history has been surreptitiously re-introduced. It does mean, however, that events to which a future belongs either latently or potentially are not thereby unhistorical, that is, on Croce's definition, not present, but that they are of less value, interest or significance for our own history as selves or as persons.

To sum up this section: we cannot cultivate a direct relation with the past in order to make it present. Nor, on the other hand is the past simply present as a solid and secure aggregate of facts about it. It is present rather as a claim or address, and in this living connection of the past with the present 'outside' and 'inside' are apperceived as being compresent, and as compresent to and with the person addressed.

These final remarks will, it is hoped, become clearer in the following section which may conveniently come under the heading: The Claim of the Past.

II

THE CLAIM OF THE PAST

As regards the question of the past and its claim upon or address to the present and the structure of this particular situation, some of Collingwood's remarks again prove to be quite helpful.

If the task of the historian may be said to differ in any real sense from that of the archivist or the chronicler then it must exceed the righteousness which confines itself to the establishment, compilation, preservation and transmission of facts, nor should it be dedicated merely

to the repetition of thought about thought about the past. Rather, Collingwood writes:

'... the historian's thought must spring from the organic unity of his total experience, and be a function of his entire personality with its practical as well as its theoretical interests.'¹

And again, in answer to the question: What is history 'for'? he says:

'... history is 'for' human self-knowledge. It is generally thought to be of importance to man that he should know himself: where knowing himself means knowing not his merely personal peculiarities, the things that distinguish him from other men, but his nature as man. Knowing yourself means knowing, first, what it is to be a man; secondly, knowing what it is to be the kind of man you are; and thirdly, knowing what it is to be the kind of man you are and nobody else is. Knowing yourself means knowing what you can do; and since nobody knows what he can do until he tries, the only clue to what man can do is what man has done. The value of history, then, is that it teaches us what man has done, and thus what man is.'²

At a superficial level it may look as though Collingwood is stating something which may be painfully obvious to some historians, namely that history points morals, a view which for many others is just as obviously mistaken. At another level, however, what these statements would seem to imply is that any claim or address which does arise from the past to encounter the historical present is one which is aimed not so much at making a quantitative increase of our knowledge about the past. Nor is such a claim or address to be regarded as the external and static values which are to be understood as being in some sense permanently appended to any given event, values which may be repeatedly referred to as safe and dependable sources of nourishment for the kind

¹The Idea of History, p.305.

²Op.cit., p.10.

of practical wisdom which is a necessary requirement for the conduct of every-day affairs. What Collingwood rather seems to be suggesting is that such claims as do intrude upon the present do so continually and in such a way that they can never be wholly absorbed or exhausted in the present. Or, to paraphrase the writer of James, they never simply become mirrors into which a man may look and then immediately forget what manner of man he was,¹ but have a peculiarly persistent power to raise continually and repeatedly a question or questions concerning the manner of man he is, so that under the pressure of such claims and because of the way in which they impose themselves upon the present, one is, in the light of them, required to re-examine and perhaps revise and correct the way in which one understands one's life, or, as Collingwood puts it, 'one's entire personality with its practical as well as its theoretical interests'.

To quote H.G. Gadamer once again:

'Ein wirklich historisches Denken muss die eigene Geschichtlichkeit mitdenken.'²

If the interpretation given here is correct, this remark provides a neat summary of Collingwood's intention. At the same time it throws into sharper relief the more implicit nerve of Collingwood's understanding of history, namely, that the reality of history is essentially and vitally dialogical. The past may therefore be said to be present to and with the historical present not simply as a theory about it or an

¹James, 1:23-24.

²Wahrheit und Methode, p.283.

explanation of it. As present in this way, if present at all, it is reduced to the level of one subject among others which may be contemplated from a secure distance. It is present rather as a claim upon my person, as an event constitutive of a total situation which is irreducibly eventful.

The abyss which separates Collingwood from Kierkegaard may in fact be much narrower than one might have been inclined to suppose,¹ however, it is to the latter that we may turn for an example which is illustrative of the distinction between the kind of understanding and approach to history which permits such claims to arise and the kind which does not, between truth as 'the way' and truth in the sense of a result. Kierkegaard writes:

'There is a difference between truth and truths, and this difference is made especially evident by the definition of truth as being, or it is evident from the fact that a distinction is drawn between the 'way' and the final decision, what is attained at the end, the 'result'. With respect to that sort of truth which permits a distinction between the way and the point ultimately reached by travelling along that way, the successor may find himself in a different position in comparison with the foregoer, he may be in a position to begin at a different point and slip into the truth more easily; in fine, the difference consists in the fact that the way is shortened, in certain cases indeed it is shortened to such a degree that it drops out, as it were, entirely. But when the truth is the way, when it is being the truth, when it is a life (and so it is Christ says of Himself, 'I am the way, the truth and the life'), then no essential change is conceivable as between the foregoer and the successor.'²

Kierkegaard then goes on to cite a number of examples, one of which

¹Cf. T.M. Knox's brief remarks in his Preface to The Idea of History, p. xvii.

²Training in Christianity, p. 202.

is illustrative of the problem here under examination:

'A man works laboriously to get an understanding of an obscure period of history upon which hitherto no investigation has been able to throw any light - finally, after spending twenty years on this work, he succeeds in bringing the historic truth to light and rendering it incontestable. The outcome inures to the advantage of the successor; the way is very considerably shortened, the successor requires perhaps barely three months to familiarise himself completely with the true situation in that obscure period.'¹

The distinction which Kierkegaard is making is of course the celebrated one between the truths of history and the truths of existence, between that which can be objectively established and verified on the one hand, and on the other, the personal involvement of the subject. What he fails to emphasise, perhaps understandably and excusably, is the fact that historical truth and existential truth cannot simply be left to go their own separate and pre-determined ways, that they are not mutually exclusive but intimately and intensively bound up with one another at every point. Nevertheless, however exaggerated this particular distinction may be, and since for Kierkegaard distinctions of this kind inevitably must fall into the category of the 'historical' and not the 'existential' in any case, it is one which does in fact correspond very closely to Collingwood's distinction between 'outside' and 'inside', and to his understanding of re-enactment as these have been interpreted here.

Collingwood's distinction may therefore be interpreted to mean that there is a difference but not a dichotomy between 'outside' and 'inside', that is, between the presentation of the facts and possibilities of a past historical event or situation in an objective way, and actually living in those possibilities, or, 'standing in the event'. And if

¹ Training in Christianity, pp. 203-204.

the interpretation of Collingwood's position up to this point has been a valid one, then the criticism which may with justification be made of Kierkegaard is not one to which he is open, since the 'outside' of any event, which includes the objective establishment and description of the facts and the inherent possibilities of that event, is compresent with its 'inside' as constituting a unitary moment with the self in the historical present. However, it must be asked whether the problem of the meaning or significance of historical events on this view now becomes a matter of subjective inclination or taste rather than a matter of fact. This is a problem which will be considered below.

In order to distinguish the position which is being put forward from another one which is widely held and with which it may easily be confused, it may be added that the view of history which is being defended is not one which presupposes the specific theory of history as fact or event plus interpretation,¹ a view which would seem to suggest that the task of the perceiving subject is to go to work on the raw material of historical factuality in an attempt to superimpose an ordered interpretation upon it, and which for all its apparent commonsense, in fact re-introduces an extremely abrupt distinction between 'outside' and 'inside' as these are understood here. The virtue of this theory is the recognition that past events do not of themselves constitute the reality of history. On the other hand, however, that reality is not something which can be defined or described in this way, nor from the solitary perspective of an isolated subject.

¹This is the theory of history adopted by C.H. Dodd whose views will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 4 below.

In order to clarify this interpretation of Collingwood's view of history we may turn again to H.G. Gadamer. The situation which with some difficulty we are attempting to describe is one in which 'outside' and 'inside' cohere and are compresent as address or as a claim upon the self. As such it may be said that this is a unitary situation in the sense that self and event stand together in dialogical reciprocity.¹ If the Greeks do not happen to have a word for this situation, the Germans can usually be relied upon to supply one. It may therefore best be described, again to borrow a term from Gadamer, as a situation which essentially involves a Horizontverschmelzung, a melting of horizons,² a term which is intended to indicate that moment of historical understanding in which past and present coincide, and which, with its suggestion of movement and change, is descriptive of the kind of situation of self with event in which one may apprehend in being apprehended, claimed or addressed. To isolate the one from

¹ Some remarks of Carl Michalson are worth quoting in this connection. He writes: 'Every historical datum is there for someone. Every historical consciousness is a consciousness of something, intending a reality other than itself. The properly historical event is neither the subject nor the object, but the point at which subject and object come together 'intentionally'. The locus of history is where the purpose of the object coincides with the consciousness of the subject. That mode of togetherness is what is meant by historical 'understanding', 'meaning', 'interpretation'. The historian in this view is not one who asks what has happened in history, nor how he should feel about what has happened. He asks for the meaning. That is the properly historical event.' The Hinge of History, pp. 27-28

² Wahrheit und Methode, pp. 286ff.; 356ff.

the other and place event over against self or self over against event, as a subject-object schema requires, would thus be to reduce what is basically a living and dynamic historical situation of essentially mutual reciprocity to a pale and lifeless abstraction.

The following example may help to illustrate the way in which events can lay claim to our recognition and our response.¹ There are many occasions when parents will deny themselves something for the sake of another member of the family. Let us imagine that a parent has made certain sacrifices for a son so that he may continue to pursue the career of his choice and that the son himself becomes fully aware of this only much later. We can imagine also that with this discovery the son might attempt to test the value of this action in an objective fashion. He may, for example, make an effort to examine the psychological motivation behind it; he may even be in a position to assess the more quantitative elements involved in that sacrifice which was once made on his behalf. All this may have its positive place. However, we may still ask whether at this stage the action has been properly understood. If we are to pursue the implications of the view which has been outlined so far, then it must be said that the action or event is not properly grasped until the son understands himself anew in relation to the parent and in terms of the sacrifice which the parent has made. The Horizontverschmelzung in this case would consist in and occur in the recognition of the son that the question which originally confronted the parent now coincides with his own question, the question of himself.

¹ For further similar examples see, for instance, Bultmann's essay, *Wissenschaft und Existenz*, in Glauben und Verstehen, Vol. III, especially pp. 115-117.

At this point we may now attempt to sum up once again before proceeding to sketch out a framework within which the question concerning the past and the problem of Einmaligkeit may be profitably discussed. It may be said first of all that the presence of events of the past does not involve a transference of the self into a past world. Consequently there is no denial of the present involved. Nor is it the case that events of the past are present purely in terms of a precise and secure aggregate of facts about them. An event is present rather as a claim upon or address to the self in a situation which is not monological but dialogical.

We must now go on to ask what relation this understanding of history may have with in thou Christou, with the things concerning Christ. This brings us to the final section of the chapter: The Past and the Problem of Einmaligkeit, or 'once-for-allness'.

III

THE PAST AND THE PROBLEM OF EINMALIGKEIT

We may now proceed (with some fear and trembling) to the most difficult problem. At this particular stage, however, it is hoped that it will be judged sufficient if we confine ourselves in this section to no more than a brief outline of the form which a possible solution to this problem might take, and, at the same time, to anticipating some of the questions which our tentative proposals may raise. In the concluding chapter these suggestions and questions will be taken up again and re-examined in the light of and in relation to the different approaches to the problem which we propose to discuss in the following four chapters.

Collingwood's name has been closely linked with the New Quest of the Historical Jesus.¹ It would seem however, that having adopted a somewhat modified version of his theory of history as the presence of the past or as re-enactment, the New Questers have found themselves faced with some rather acute problems.² One of these problems is that of the relationship between history and eternal happiness, and the extent to which our certainty about the latter depends upon a decision concerning the former. One approach to this question has been to suggest that what is required is a decision about a past fact (Jesus' openness to transcendence), or, in similar terms, a decision on the basis of Jesus' own decision by means of which his certainty about transcendence somehow becomes our certainty. One of the difficulties of such a view is however that neither the nature and implications of Jesus' decision nor his openness to transcendence can be demonstrated with complete historical certainty. In this particular area just as in others we discover that history giveth, history taketh away. To suggest therefore that our confidence about ho Eschaton (or about transcendence) must be dependent upon a decision of this kind is to insert a doubt at a point where it is least required, a doubt corrosive enough and with sufficient strength to carry everything else with it.

As Van A. Harvey quite pointedly puts it: 'No remote historical event - especially if assertions about it can solicit only a tentative assent - can, as such, be the basis of religious confidence about the

¹See, for example, James H. Robinson's A New Quest of the Historical Jesus, pp. 31 and 42.

²For an excellent summary and criticism of the New Quest see Van A. Harvey's The Historian and the Believer, Chapter 6, pp. 164ff.

present.¹ If this is the case, and if the source of our confidence about God's last Word which gives freedom and certainty is not to be located in an event stopped dead in its tracks in the past like a pillar of salt (or asphalt?), where does it appear?

On the view of history which has been outlined above we can say that it appears in the present constraint of a past event upon us in which 'outside' and 'inside' cohere and which has the nature of a disclosure. The disclosure is of such a kind that it has the power to illuminate our lives as a whole in the sense that such an event itself determines the way in which we speak about and interpret it in its relation to other events, and the power to elicit our confidence, trust and commitment.

Events of this kind may be called paradigmatic or formative events. Their Sitz in Leben is to be found as intimately bound up with the story of a self or a community. They are not the kind of events which are consciously recollected in tranquillity nor made present by means of a strenuous exercise in the remembrance of things past. Their presence is primary. It is their dynamic and inexhaustible presence and its comprehensive relevance for the life of a person or a community with their hopes and fears and their sufferings and commitments which first sets in motion and indeed encourages that recollection, and, in the case of Christianity, its ceaseless research into the problems and conditions of its historical origins, the quests of the historical Jesus both old and new.

As formative or paradigmatic, such events claim our recognition and response and invite our commitment. They do not present themselves

¹The Historian and the Believer, p.282

only after having shed their more external proportions. Nevertheless, as imposing a claim or address we are called upon to look with them, that is, to view them not so much in terms of their quantities, but rather in the light of what they promise, and in the light of their respective abilities to lend our lives some coherence, meaning and intelligibility.

There are many paradigms. They range from the typical gesture of the parent which can become prototypical for the child, to the significance of such events as the crossing of the Red Sea or the Russian Revolution in the story of a nation. These are the kind of events which are constitutive of the identity of a person or a community, of the way they have come, the way they are and hope to be. They sum up their story, and in so doing act as a present point of reference and as the creative source from which selves and communities look backward in remembrance and forward in hope.

The paradigm which refers to faith and to which faith refers is Jesus Christ. To quote H. Richard Niebuhr:

'The special occasion to which we appeal in the Christian Church is called Jesus Christ, in whom we see the righteousness of God, his power and wisdom. But from that special occasion we also derive the concepts which make possible the elucidation of all the events of our history. Revelation means the intelligible event which makes all other events intelligible.'¹

However, the recognition that Jesus is 'the intelligible event which makes all other events intelligible', that the recognition of and the response to his claim determines one's understanding of and one's response to all other claims, includes also the recognition that this is not

¹The Meaning of Revelation, p.93. In this connection we may also quote David H. Jenkins: 'To discover that Jesus is the Christ is to discover the fact that is determinative of one's understanding of all other facts.' The Glory of Man, p.37.

merely one paradigm among others. He is the last paradigm, ho Eschaton, or sinnalig. And further, it is in terms of the paradigmatic significance of this event for history and for my history that 'outside' and 'inside', the Jesus of history and ho Eschaton or the Christ of faith cohere.

However, it must be pointed out that this kind of coherence or correlation is not quite direct or symmetrical, and for the moment we may perhaps be permitted to expand this very slightly in the form of another series of questions. Does the fact that we describe Jesus Christ as the last paradigm not simply raise the problem of correlation in a much more acute form? What kind of correspondence can there possibly be between Jesus and Christ? Does this not in fact imply that there is an abrupt discontinuity between our recognition and response to the claim of ho Eschaton on the one hand, and to the Jesus of history on the other, or for that matter the response we may make to any one of the many other claims which arise to encounter us in our history?

This is one of the principal questions to which we must return in our final chapter. In the meantime we can answer these questions only in a rather oblique fashion, an obliqueness which is in certain respects related to the indirect nature of the correlation between Jesus and ho Eschaton in the paradigm. We have to answer No in one sense, Yes in another.

No, because Christ is in the same sense present in the ongoing dialogue of history along with all the other claims which struggle and compete for our recognition and our allegiance, so that there is no immediate difference between the way in which we can encounter his claim or the address of any other historical event or person. If this were not in fact the case then we would be forced to refuse the status

of history to every other claim, renounce them as illusory, or simply write them all off as part of a rather grotesque docetic masquerade.

The answer is however also Yes, for at the same time there is also a difference about this recognition that Jesus is no Eschaton. The essence of it is difficult to explain, the consequence no less, for what this difference precisely is is something which cannot easily be described. Nevertheless, it may be said that it does make a difference. That is to say, while such a recognition does not necessarily involve the flat negation of every other historical claim, it is nevertheless a recognition in which we do encounter him as 'something more' than that which any other claim can present, and as a 'something more' which still does not involve us in a one-sided denial or rejection of every other historical claim.

A more extended discussion of this matter must be reserved for our final chapter. For the moment, what then can be said about this 'something more'? He is not simply present as one object among others, as verfügbar, and therefore as available for detached analysis and description. Rather, we encounter him in the first instance as a question to history and to our own history ever anew. We may also say that it is not merely as one question among others that this claim meets us. We encounter him not as a question but rather as the open question to ourselves in the inescapable Fräglichkeit of our lives, and again in the first instance as the open question to every other historical claim which impinges upon us. It is this open question which again and again recalls history to freedom and openness by resisting and suspending the inevitable tendency of other historical claims to absolutise

themselves within history.¹

Through this encounter we discover that we are set free in and for history, that we are liberated to meet its claim responsibly and without fear. The experience of this freedom, the fact that it continually refers us beyond ourselves to ho Eschatos and not back to ourselves and our own unfreedom, incompleteness and lostness, is the experience of transcendence. We encounter him therefore not in himself, but firstly in his questioning solicitude for history, as the One whose freedom keeps history historical, enabling us in this way to name him ho Eschatos, the decisive disclosure of God's historical concern and care.

Some of the principal implications of these tentative remarks will be taken up again and discussed in our final chapter.

We may now go on to examine some of the different ways in which this problem has been approached and discussed, beginning with an exposition and critique of the solution offered by the 'school' of Consistent Eschatology.

¹In his book The Shape of Christology, John McIntyre in the course of his discussion of the 'given' of Christology deals briefly with 'the given as the problematical'. While we would agree with many of the points which are made in this connection I am not so sure that such an approach need be as 'romantic and highfalutin' as Professor McIntyre suggests. While 'the given as the problematical' does require some supplementation, it may be argued at least that it encounters us in the first instance as a question as has been stressed. This is not the case in the last instance, for the question which encounters us does not, in the Johannine sense, leave us 'bereft' or 'desolate' (orphans, John 14:18). As regards supplementation: the question also may be said to bear the correlative promise of the parakletos. This also perhaps opens up one possibility for a doctrine of the Spirit in relation to history.

CHAPTER THREE : HISTORY AND CONSISTENT ESCHATOLOGY

A. Schweitzer, P. Buri and H. Werner

CHAPTER THREE

CONSISTENT ESCHATOLOGY

The reason why this study begins with an examination of the consistent eschatology of Albert Schweitzer and his followers is not founded upon any particular desire to form a 'back to Schweitzer' movement. It is prompted rather by the fact that practically all his critics acknowledge a quite considerable debt to him yet seldom explain exactly why. This is possibly because Schweitzer, more than many others, is in the paradoxical position of being the kind of scholar and critic whose positive findings, or rather those findings which he accepted for himself as positive, were rejected by all apart from the very few who continued, and still continue, to take his views seriously. The majority, on the other hand, unable to accept Schweitzer's historical conclusions, found their own historical-critical assumptions radically questioned. Yet at the same time Schweitzer not only raised problems; he also provided his successors with some quite new angles of vision for their approach to what had once again, with Schweitzer's help, become the strange new world of early Christianity and of the New Testament. This was what was to prove immensely fruitful even for those who can by no means be reckoned among the members of the Consistent School.

Another and more important reason for beginning with Schweitzer is that an attempt may be made to trace his influence upon one exponent

of consistent eschatology in particular, namely, Fritz Buri. As we hope to show, Buri has raised certain very important issues with regard to the status of mythology and has posed anew the problem of the relation between history and eschatology in a quite acute way. Thus if we still feel moved to protest that Schweitzer really belongs somewhere among the deeper strata of New Testament archaeology and that his voice has rightly become inaudible, perhaps through Buri more than anyone else, we may hear his voice once more.

I

It was Johannes Weiss in his Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes¹ with its emphasis upon the eschatological nature of Jesus' proclamation who laid the foundation for the further researches of Albert Schweitzer. But quite apart from the fact that the innovating work of Weiss has had a much wider influence upon New Testament scholarship, it is here that his influence ends as far as the school of consistent eschatology² is

¹First Edition, Göttingen, 1892.

²The German 'konsequent' may also be translated 'thoroughgoing'. However in its theological application the term is somewhat misleading. For Schweitzer it was a question of a choice between thoroughgoing scepticism or thoroughgoing eschatology, i.e., we must either accept the image of Jesus presented by the gospels as creations of the evangelists, or, we must regard it, complete with the eschatological sayings, as a true picture of Jesus. Schweitzer made the latter choice. In Schweitzer's hands therefore, the term consistent eschatology, when applied to Jesus or Paul, refers to their consistently eschatological attitude or outlook. Any post-Pauline development of thought is understood as having been controlled by a consistent de-eschatologising, a necessity which was brought about by the delay and non-occurrence of the Parousia. Thus for Schweitzer, de-eschatologising is closely related to 'hellenisation', which he regarded as a post-Pauline development.

concerned, for he played no part in formulating what were eventually to become its dogmas. It was Schweitzer, especially in his Quest of the Historical Jesus¹ and in Mysticism of Paul the Apostle² who was responsible for laying its doctrinal foundations, and it is largely in the former that he states what were to become the main tenets of the school now represented by Martin Werner, and, though with certain qualifications, by Fritz Buri.

Schweitzer writes:

'The whole of Christianity to the present day, its inner effective history, depends upon the 'delay of the Parousia': i.e., on the non-fulfilment of the Parousia, on the abandonment of the eschatology, on the progressive and self-developing de-eschatologising of the religion which was consequent on this abandonment.'³

From this statement alone it is quite clear that for Schweitzer there can be no eschatology which is not in some way centred upon or related to the idea of the Parousia. However, what he is more specifically concerned about when it comes to the problem of interpreting the message of Jesus or of Paul is not the Parousia as such, but the attitude of intense expectation which its future advent aroused. It is in this attitude that Schweitzer finds the essence of eschatology.

Consistent eschatology, understood as Parousia-expectation therefore becomes the only legitimate principle of interpretation for the message and activity of Jesus and for the theology of Paul. On the other hand, the key to all subsequent developments is provided by

¹First German edition, Von Reimarus zu Wrede, 1906. Passages quoted here are taken from the third English edition, 1954.

²English edition, 1931.

³The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Third edition, p. 358.

the fact that this confident expectation of an imminent end was never fulfilled. A process of de-eschatologising or 'hellenisation' replaced the thoroughgoing outlook of both Jesus and Paul because the expected Parousia did not in fact take place. Consequently, in the post-Pauline situation, now that the Parousia was no longer considered an event to be reckoned with, but as a spent force, one of the most serious problems which the church now had to face was the problem of ongoing history, a problem which had arisen because of the delay and non-occurrence of the end. This meant also that with the new historical situation, consistent eschatology, or the eschatological dogma which Jesus shared with his whole generation, simply disappeared. (As we shall see, this is what also accounts for the disappearance of the historical Jesus interpreted in the light of this dogma.)

In order to support the principle of consistent eschatology a further distinction has to be made so that both Jesus and Paul may be treated under the same heading. Schweitzer asserts that one must give either a hellenistic interpretation of Paul or an eschatological one. It is impossible to give both because they are diametrically opposed to one another. Schweitzer therefore chooses the latter because: 'It assumes the complete agreement of the teaching of Paul with that of Jesus.'¹ Thus the element which unites the life and teaching of Jesus with that of Paul is the eschatological, the attitude of expectation which, understood on the one hand in relation to Jesus, refers to 'the conduct of one who looked forward to his messianic Parousia in the near future'.² This

¹The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, Introduction, viii. This is a choice which implies a rejection of the views of the 'history of religions' school.

²The Quest of the Historical Jesus, p.349

attitude is thus the key by means of which his activity, what he did and why, may be properly interpreted and evaluated. On the other hand, it serves also as a hermeneutical key to the thought and activity of Paul which is always 'uniformly dominated by the immediate return of Jesus, of the judgement and the messianic glory'.¹

It is therefore in this sense that Parousia-expectation is to be understood. It is the determining factor as regards the life of Jesus and therefore the key to any proper interpretation of his conduct and activity. It is this intense and insuperable belief in the eschatological dogma which is the motive force behind his actions and decisions.

Stated briefly this is Schweitzer's general position. We may now go on to examine it in some more detail in order to discover how he applied this principle of interpretation and some of the conclusions which he reached by means of it. Finally we shall examine these conclusions and some of the problems they involve in so far as they are more directly related to our theme. In his Mysticism of Paul the Apostle Schweitzer outlines his method of approach to the history of early Christianity as follows:

'My methods have remained old-fashioned² in that I aim at setting forth the ideas of Paul in their historically conditioned form. I believe that the mingling of our ways of regarding religion with those of former historical periods, which is now so much practised, often with dazzling cleverness, is of no use as an aid to historical comprehension, and of not much use in the end for our religious life.'

¹ The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, p.52.

² 'Old-fashioned', that is, in contrast to the views of the 'History of religions' school represented mainly by Pfliegerer, Bousset, Reitmüller, Gunkel, Reitzenstein, Lidsbarski, and later by Bultmann.

The investigation of historical truth in itself I regard as the ideal for which scientific theology has to strive. I still hold fast to the opinion that the permanent spiritual importance that the religious thought of the past has for ours makes itself most strongly felt when we come into touch with that form of piety as it really existed, not as we make the best of it for ourselves.¹

This statement in his book on Paul is among the clearest and most emphatic concerning Schweitzer's own approach to the question of the historical origins of Christianity and is one which may be equally applied with regard to his whole approach to the problem of the historical Jesus. At this stage one or two comments on this statement will help to clarify Schweitzer's position.

Quite apart from the whole problem as to whether there can ever be such a thing as the kind of historical objectivity which he believed there could be, Schweitzer's endeavour was to establish 'historical truth in itself'. His ideal was that the historian must be completely impartial in any attempt to interpret and evaluate historical sources. This reflects his most profound respect for the past as such, and a determination to avoid the more extreme excesses of his contemporaries.²

There is a clear echo here of Ranke's 'wie es eigentlich gewesen', which in E.H. Carr's words is 'a none too profound aphorism',³ but which nevertheless among other things at least implied that historians should be very wary of moving too readily from establishing facts to making value

¹The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, Introduction ix.

²Cf. e.g. The Quest of the Historical Jesus, p. 333, where Schweitzer criticises writers of lives of Jesus for filling in the gaps in the historical evidence of the gospels with psychology and writes: 'This ticket office is now closed'.

³E.H. Carr, What is History? p.8.

judgements about them, and that they should strongly resist the temptation to import the values and ideals of their own time into the past. Not only did this do the past an injustice, it also served simply to reinforce a historian's personal opinions or prejudices about the past, so that he was actually in the position not of dealing with the past as such but with the past as he would have liked it to have been.

Thus Schweitzer was at pains to avoid the mistake which contemporary writers of the life of Jesus were prone to commit, that of transforming the Jesus of history into plausible reflections of themselves and their ideals. He therefore set out to suspend his own subjectivity as far as possible in an attempt to present a picture of the actual Jesus, Jesus as he really was.

Nor did Schweitzer have any doubts whatsoever that an objective picture of the historical Jesus could be established. The truth of such a picture could also be tested, the main criterion of its truth being that such a picture must be completely free from any trace of the nineteenth century Zeitgeist. To quote James M. Robinson commenting upon Schweitzer's remark that the Jesus of the nineteenth century biographies was really a modernisation, a Jesus clothed in the garments of bourgeois respectability and neo-Kantian moralism:

'Schweitzer did not radicalise this insight into a questioning of the objectivity of historical research as such, but himself presented a reconstruction of Jesus which he regarded as objective, simply because it lacked the Victorianism of the classical lives of Christ.' ¹

¹ A New Quest of the Historical Jesus, Studies in Biblical Theology, No. 25, pp. 32-34. Robinson's next sentence is also worth quoting: 'Nor did his (Schweitzer's) insight lead him to doubt the appropriateness of the sources for the kind of chronological biography he and his predecessors tried to write'. p. 34.

The impression one gains therefore, is that the more Jesus could be depicted as a total stranger to the nineteenth century self-understanding, the truer and more objective the reconstruction was likely to be. The problem of history as the presence of the past is thus obviously not Schweitzer's concern. What mattered more than anything else was how Jesus understood himself and how he was heard and understood by his contemporaries.

What then is there that can be objectively established about the historical Jesus? Schweitzer's answer to this question is that it is the world-view which Jesus shared with his contemporaries which can be established beyond doubt and everything else follows from this. In the Quest this is stated quite explicitly in the following very important passage:

'It is quite inexplicable', Schweitzer writes, 'That the eschatological school, with its clear perception of the eschatological element of the preaching of the kingdom of God, did not also hit upon the thought of the 'dogmatic' element in the history of Jesus. Eschatology is simply 'dogmatic history' - history as moulded by theological beliefs - which breaks in upon the natural course of history and abrogates it. Is it not even a priori the only conceivable view that the conduct of one who looked forward to his messianic Parousia in the near future should be determined, not by the natural course of events, but by that expectation? The chaotic confusion of the narratives ought to have suggested that the events had been thrown into confusion by the volcanic force of an incalculable personality, not by some kind of carelessness or freak of the tradition.'¹

There are at least two points which might be remarked upon in connection with this statement. One is that 'the chaotic confusion of the narratives' did not prevent Schweitzer from writing a chronological biography of the life of Jesus, as James M. Robinson has pointed out.²

¹ The Quest of the Historical Jesus, p. 349

² Cf. note 1, p.50 above.

Secondly, and more important, what Schweitzer suggests here is that Jesus found himself in such a position that he could not do otherwise than literally appropriate the apocalyptic-eschatological frame of reference which was the 'ideology' of the time. Consequently the picture of Jesus which emerges is inevitably that of the dogmatic apocalypticist, who when the tide of events proves contrary to his expectations, finds himself in an impossible situation in which he resolutely decides to force the issue in the belief that his offering of himself in a final desperate effort will lead to the irruption of the eschaton or of the reign of God. His end is inevitably tragic because the wheel of history which he turns only turns to crush him. 'The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to his purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is his victory and his reign.'¹

This effort to shape history according to eschatology or 'dogmatic history', which for Schweitzer are one and the same thing, is bound to result in failure and tragedy. History and historical circumstances are of such a nature that they can never permit the realisation of the messianic ideal.

This then is the result of the Quest, the memorial to the life of Jesus research and its funeral oration.² This is the picture of Jesus as he really was, the one who for Schweitzer must always remain a

¹ The Quest of the Historical Jesus, p.368f.

² G. Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, p.13.

nameless stranger. Nevertheless it is a biography just the same. Certainly it is the biography of an incalculable personality, so very obviously different from the psychologising lives of Jesus which Schweitzer so brilliantly criticised. However, one question we may ask is, just how different? But before we can answer this question we must first of all attempt to examine some further implications of Schweitzer's approach to history and some of the conclusions which he reached on the basis of his principle of consistent eschatology. At the same time this will help to prepare the way for discussion of the views of Fritz Buri and the consequences which he has drawn from some of Schweitzer's presuppositions.

II

Schweitzer's views concerning the historical Jesus are sufficiently known and have been widely criticised. More will be said below about his approach to the problem of eschatology and the way in which he chose to translate its meaning for those of a much later time to whom the eschatological dogma had become meaningless. For the moment it is necessary to examine his approach to the problem of history in rather more detail.

For the sake of preliminary clarification it should be pointed out that despite his apparent rejection of the methods and approach of the 'history of religions' school to the problems of the history of early Christianity, Schweitzer has in fact selected a principle of interpretation which presupposes some of the findings of this school. The discovery that late Jewish apocalyptic was the historically contingent framework within which early Christianity took shape is one which can be

attributed to the work of this school and Schweitzer has in fact derived his principle of consistent eschatology from it. It appears therefore that what Schweitzer in fact refused to accept was not so much the approach of the religionsgeschichtliche school as such, but its obvious Hellenistic bias. And this is also why Schweitzer insisted that a principle of interpretation must be found which would be sufficiently comprehensive to cover both Jesus and Paul.

What then are the consequences which emerge when the principle of consistent eschatology is applied as a key to interpreting and understanding the historical Jesus?

First of all, if it means that the teaching and activity of Jesus have to be examined and understood within the context of late Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, then one can hardly take exception to it as a preliminary starting point for historical investigation. On the other hand however, what actually proves to be the more hidden than revealed consequence of this presupposition, namely, that Jesus must be understood as one who was utterly at the mercy of the contemporary Zeitgeist, is something which cannot be so easily accepted. This is in fact one of the more serious criticisms to which Schweitzer's approach to the problem of the historical Jesus is open. In rightly emphasising the place which must necessarily be given to the apocalyptic-eschatological frame of reference, Schweitzer goes on to assume that Jesus must have accepted it without question or criticism. (This same point might be made with reference to his interpretation of Paul.) The closed system of contemporary ideas to which Jesus is said to have subjected himself is understood as embodying an absolute claim upon his unquestioning obedience. He literally appropriates the eschatological dogma and in

turn becomes entirely dominated by it. Thus Schweitzer allows Jesus no freedom of movement within this framework ^{either} ~~whether~~ to modify or transform it. The eschatological dogma in fact has the force of an idea fixe in the light of which his actions and conduct become all too plain. His life may be explained in terms of a mounting obsession.

This in turn points to a second weakness in Schweitzer's approach and one which he was determined at all costs to avoid. When he equates eschatology with 'dogmatic history' or with 'history as moulded by theological beliefs' he is clearly referring to a Parousia-centred eschatology. He understands that it is against this background that the conduct and activity of Jesus come into sharper focus. It is the objective principle for interpreting and explaining what he did and why. However, it is difficult not to suspect that once this has been stated, what then really becomes of interest to Schweitzer are the more psychological implications of the eschatological dogma and their significance for the person who is dominated by it, or the kind of conduct which is likely to be most characteristic of one who is wholly determined by an insuperable conviction (which in Jesus' case later turned to disillusionment) about the imminent end of the world. Dominated and motivated by the eschatological dogma Jesus becomes a type whose course of action becomes almost predictable.

These two points may be taken together in summing up the difficulties of Schweitzer's position. Dominated by the eschatological dogma there can be no possible alternative for Jesus but to submit to the inner necessity of the course of behaviour which the dogma demands. Behind this there lies a hidden psychological premise in terms of which his conduct, or pattern of behaviour, becomes explicable, namely, a

presupposition about the subjective attitude or state of mind which is evoked in him when confronted by the apocalyptic magnitude of a wholly future event which is believed will put an end to the world and to history.

If this interpretation is correct, then eschatology loses most of its force as a theological concept and belongs more properly to the sphere of the psychology of religion. History on the other hand, with its complexities and ambiguities, is reduced to that which can be read off events or imposed upon them in the light of a principle. Georges Florevsky has described and criticised this view as follows:

'The historian is never content with a fragmentary vision. He tends to discover, or to presuppose, more order in the flux of events than probably there ever was. He tends to exaggerate the cohesion of various aspects of the past. As H.I. Harrou describes the historian's procedure, he endeavours, for the sake of intelligibility, to substitute 'an orderly vision', 'une vision ordonnée', for that 'dust of small facts' of which the actual happening seems to consist. No historian can resist doing so ... In a sense, it is a legitimate device. A historian tends to overcome, in a synthetic image, the empirical complexity and often confusion of individual bits, and occurrences, to organise them into a coherent whole, and to relate the multiplicity of occurrences to the unity of a character. This is seldom done in a logical way, by a rational reconstruction. Historians act rather as inductive artists go by intuition. Historians have their own visions. But these are transforming visions. It is by this method that all major generalisations of our historiography have been created: the Hellenic mind; the mediaeval man; the bourgeois; and the like ... They are, as it were, valid visions, like artistic portraits, and, as such, they are indispensable tools of understanding. But 'typical men' are different from real men of flesh and blood ... There is indeed an inherent determinism in all these typical and categorical images. But they are no more than a useful shorthand for the 'dust of facts'.¹

This is a criticism which may justifiably be made of Schweitzer's approach to history. The 'synthetic image' which he applies is the principle of consistent eschatology. By means of it he is able to impose an ordered

¹G. Florevsky, The Predicament of the Christian Historian, in Religion and Culture, Essays in Honour of Paul Tillich, pp. 152-153. The quotation from Harrou is taken from his De la Connaissance historique, p.47.

vision upon the historical material. At first sight the results which the application of this principle provide appear to possess a plausible kind of objectivity. But as with most history which is interpreted in the light of principles, it is very often the historian himself who stands to gain more in the sense that he provides us with a perspective upon himself rather than one by means of which his subject-matter is illuminated.

We are now in a better position to answer the question posed earlier as to just how different Schweitzer's Jesus actually is. Superficially there appears to be no comparison whatever between the Jesus of consistent eschatology and the Jesus of liberal theology. However, if this interpretation and evaluation of his historical method is correct, it seems that no matter how much he was determined to avoid it, Schweitzer has in fact been unable to present a picture of Jesus which is wholly free from psychologising tendencies, nor can it be said that the principle of consistent eschatology provides the sure key to the historical objectivity which he believed it would.

Turning now from some of the difficulties which have been indicated with regard to Schweitzer's approach to history, we may now go on to make a closer examination of his understanding and interpretation of the very closely related problem of eschatology. For Schweitzer, history and eschatology are two sides of the one coin.

As we have already pointed out, the essence of eschatology for Schweitzer is an intense and insuperable conviction that the future Parousia will bring the world and history to an end and usher in the reign of God. We have already dealt with one of the consequences of this definition, namely, the image of Jesus which emerges when this interpretative key is applied. Now we may examine in more detail what is more specifically

implied by this understanding of eschatology as an attitude of intense expectation, not only in relation to Jesus, but also for those who recognise the significance of Jesus in terms of the community of their will with his.¹ This latter question is related to Schweitzer's translation of eschatology for his own time, for an age which regarded the eschatological dogma as a mere curiosity.

What then does this sense of intense expectation mean, not only as a key to the activity and conduct of the historical Jesus, but also with regard to its more specific implications for the corresponding mode of historical existence which is characteristic of those whose wills are united with the will of Jesus?

It is sometimes overlooked that it was Schweitzer who may be said to have put this question in this particular way, and only later Bultmann, who in many respects is quite close to Schweitzer as we shall see. But it is Schweitzer who must be credited with having taken eschatology quite seriously in its relation to history and to historical existence. He has helped to dislodge it from its traditional place at the end of dogmatic treatises so that it no longer has the lowly status of what Karl Barth called an 'innocent appendix on the last things'. Schweitzer certainly gives eschatology a place which makes it much less a source of embarrassment, although it may still nevertheless remain a source of certain very acute difficulties.

By means of the principle of consistent eschatology certain other aspects are opened up as regards the bearing of eschatology upon historical existence. For one whose convictions and expectations are wholly oriented toward the future there is an implicit 'abrogation' of history which could

¹ See note 4, p.61 below.

be understood as freedom from the past, or at least as the resolution and refusal to allow one's life to be determined by the past. In turn this implies a conscious and resolute rejection of the world and its values in favour of an Interimethik with its radical demands, the fulfilment of which is imperative for entrance into the glory which is to come. The future as the 'not yet' is understood not simply as some temporal or chronological quantity,¹ nor as separate and unrelated to the present, but as of vital importance for the present, governing it and making its own presence felt even to such an extent that the present itself is swallowed up by the sheer urgency of the demands made upon it by the future and the promises which it holds. History seems to be foreshortened to such an extent that, as Bultmann would say, it is swallowed up in eschatology.²

Indeed Schweitzer suggests an interpretation of eschatology in its relation to historical existence which implies a kind of Entweltlichung.³ a term which though inapplicable in its original sense may nevertheless be used to designate that aspect of eschatology which implies a limitation or

¹ Emil Brunner writes: 'The chronological element constituted by the nearness of the expected end had not at all the central significance assumed by the thoroughgoing eschatologists.' Whether this meets the case is not quite clear for it may be doubted whether chronology was of any real importance for the Consistent School. For Brunner's more general remarks on consistent eschatology see Eternal Hope, pp. 127-130.

² R. Bultmann, Geschichte und Eschatologie, p. 42.

³ Bultmann's term; cf. e.g. Geschichte und Eschatologie im Neuen Testament, in Glauben und Verstehen, III, p. 105.

qualification of history, or, in Schweitzer's terms, for those whose wills are common with the will of Jesus, that attitude to the world and to history which is shaped by the end of history and which lives from that which in some sense is beyond history, or from that which is wholly future and therefore not yet history.

There is undoubtedly this side to Schweitzer, a side which has been probably more appreciated by Bultmann than by the Consistent School itself. Unfortunately however, in translating or interpreting this further for his own non-Jewish and non-apocalyptic age, Schweitzer's eschatology disappears altogether. Eschatology becomes ethics, and every link with the historical Jesus is dissolved. Jesus becomes the supreme embodiment of a timeless truth of which Paul is a somewhat lesser instance. Schweitzer's understanding of the eschatological mode of historical existence becomes the attitude which is implicit in the ethic of 'reverence for life', (Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben).

It is in his approach to this problem that the beginnings of a foundation for the existential theology of Fritz Buri are laid. First of all we shall give a brief outline of Schweitzer's own approach to this problem, then we shall go on to discuss Buri's position and conclude with a critical assessment of both points of view.

Describing the embarrassment of earlier critics when confronted by the problem of eschatology Schweitzer writes:

'Men feared that to admit the claims of eschatology would abolish the significance of his (Jesus') words for our time ... But in reality that which is eternal in the words of Jesus is due to the very fact that they are based on an eschatological world-view, and contain the expression of a mind for which the contemporary world with its historical and social circumstances no longer had any existence. They are appropriate, therefore, to any world, for in

every world they raise the man who dares to meet their challenge, and does not turn and twist them into meaninglessness, above his world and his time, making him inwardly free, so that he is fitted to be, in his own world and his own time, a simple channel of the power of Jesus.¹

And again in the Quest there are the well-known words:

'Jesus means something to our world because a mighty spiritual force streams forth from him and flows through our time also.'²

We are therefore quite at liberty to dispense with late-Jewish apocalyptic eschatology because it is historically conditioned and incidental. This means that we may also dispense with the Jesus of history, the Jesus whose life and conduct were determined by the eschatological dogma. Nevertheless, this eschatology contains a 'spiritual essence'³ which we may always make our own. For although

'No personality of the past can be transported to the present by means of historical reflection or affirmations about his authoritative significance ... We (may) enter into a relationship with him only by being brought together in the recognition of a common will ... So our religion in so far as it is to be regarded as specifically christian, is not so much a 'Jesus-cult' as it is a 'Jesus-mysticism'.⁴

Thus Schweitzer can conclude that if we are to meet with any Jesus at all, it must be with the Jesus who 'is absolutely independent of historical knowledge'.⁵ It would be interesting to explore this whole problem in much more detail but this is not the place. Stated

¹ The Quest of the Historical Jesus, p. 400.

² Op.cit. p. 397.

³ The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, p. 384.

⁴ From Robert Clark's translation of the last chapter in the Quest in The Philosophy of Albert Schweitzer, pp. 203-204.

⁵ The Quest of the Historical Jesus, p. 399.

briefly, Schweitzer's translation of eschatology consists in the attempt to bring to the surface the truths which are enshrined in it. What eschatology actually expressed is an ethic which is universally valid. In it the will of Jesus is made manifest to us, a will which we may recognise as common with our own. This is the will-to-live, the will which strives for perfection and which becomes active in terms of 'reverence for life'.

Our relationship to Jesus is therefore a mystical relationship of the will which moves toward fulfilment and perfection (Lebensvollendung). Eschatology is the disposable vehicle which gives expression to this ethic as it is supremely embodied in Jesus (and in Paul and others). Jesus himself is the archetypal embodiment and the supreme instance of that ethic which is characterised by 'self-sacrifice for the sake of other life motivated by reverence for life itself'.¹ And, Schweitzer writes, 'The ethic of reverence for life is the ethic of Jesus brought to philosophical expression'.²

Important also for our understanding of Fritz Buri is Schweitzer's view that the perfection toward which the will-to-live strives belongs to it by definition: 'The will-to-live ... bears in itself the impulse to realise itself to the highest possible degree of perfection ... The impulse toward perfection is innate in us ...'.³

¹Civilisation and Ethics, p. 250

²Op.cit., p. 258

³Op.cit., p. 222. This idea of a perfection given with our existence provides Buri with a link to the philosophy of Karl Jaspers and forms part of his understanding of grace and creation. Cf. John Macquarrie, The Scope of Demythologising, pp. 142-151

This then is the other side to Schweitzer, the side which in the end seems to predominate. Not only has he apparently left history behind, it now looks as though his exposition leaves no place for any understanding of eschatology at all. Rather than being 'swallowed up' by eschatology, not only history but even eschatology as well are swallowed up by the ethic of reverence for life. So it appears. But the question we must pose is whether Schweitzer, having apparently freed faith from what he regards to be its embarrassing historical particularity in Jesus, allows any ultimate or eschatological significance to the Christ-event at all.

If we define eschatology as being descriptive of God's decisive act in Jesus Christ in and through which faith first becomes a genuine possibility then the answer must be no. On the other hand, regarded as the ultimate symbol of the will to perfection, or as the 'anonymous spirit who transcends the dogma of eschatology and every other historical limitation, personifying the timeless ideal of the heroic will',¹ Jesus does retain a certain eschatological significance. The difficulty is however, that history and eschatology cannot be so easily separated in this way. The real problem with regard to Schweitzer's position is that Jesus as historical event and Jesus as the eschatological symbol flow apart like oil and water. This is a problem which becomes much more apparent and more acute with Fritz Buri and it is to an outline and examination of his views that we must now turn.

III

Although Buri's more recent writings show some signs of a change

¹ Richard R. Niebuhr, Resurrection and Historical Reason, p. 134.

in direction, and although he has admitted that the approach of the Consistent School has to some extent been one-sided,¹ we shall probably have to await the publication of the third and fourth volumes of his Dogmatics to discover whether this change will prove to be of any real significance as far as his understanding and interpretation of the problem of the relation between history and eschatology is concerned. His work is especially important in relation to that of Rudolf Bultmann. Their conclusions point to certain similarities in their approach to this problem, but also to some very distinct differences.²

Following Schweitzer, Buri largely accepts the consistent eschatological interpretation of the history of early Christianity. The stress is upon the centrality of the Parousia dogma and its consequent significance for the self-understanding of the early church, the community which lived eschatologically and for which the values of this world had come to an end. Buri particularly rejects any heilsgeschichtliche interpretation of eschatology because it is forced to re-mythologise, and because such an understanding of eschatology can never do proper justice to the New Testament image of the church which stands at the end of history, nor to its eschatological faith. In addition to this, the eschatological expectation which is the main characteristic of the faith of those early days is something which can

¹ See, Dogmatik als Selbstverständnis des christlichen Glaubens, Vol. 1, p. 3.

² For an excellent exposition in relation to those of Bultmann, see John Macquarrie's The Scope of Demythologising, especially pp. 129-153.

rightly be understood only within its own historical context. Any heilsgeschichtliche eschatology thus misrepresents the New Testament, for in still holding to the notion of a future Parousia, it is forced to keep postponing the event and has to push it farther and farther into the future where its original significance is lost. It confuses the significance of the Naherwartung and for the sake of a contemporary apologetic substitutes the idea of Fernerwartung. In other words, the proponents of a heilsgeschichtliche eschatology do not accept that the historicity of the eschatological dogma is confined to the first century alone and has to be understood only within this context and in its significance for the early community.

Since the bulk of this chapter is concerned mainly with Schweitzer, our outline of Buri's position will be somewhat shorter.

Before dealing with those aspects of Buri's work which are most specifically related to the theme of this study, there are at least two points in relation to his theology which must be briefly mentioned for the sake of clarification. The first of these is Buri's conception of existence as grace, the second his understanding of mythology as the cipher-language of existence.

First of all we may state his position regarding existence as grace, an aspect of Buri's theology which is extremely difficult to grasp. His view is that human existence is characterised by an indwelling or inherent grace, a grace which man experiences as a gift.¹

¹ Keryama und Mythos, II, p.94, p.97.

The grace with which human existence is endowed is not to be understood as something which is under man's control.¹ At the same time it is not something which comes from beyond man. It is already there in existence and constitutes the givenness of man's true life. In biblical terms the grace of existence is the image of God in man, the man who from the beginning is simultaneously guilty and reconciled. In Pauline terms this corresponds to being 'in Christ'.² This is where Buri's view differs from the more traditional views of grace, for to be 'in Christ' is not a mode of existence which is made possible by any special act of God in Jesus Christ. Rather it is by virtue of the grace which belongs to the structure of existence as such that a man may be said to be already 'in Christ'. That grace is the primordial givenness which constitutes man's life is something which man may perceive and to which he may also become alive.³

As clear an expression as may be found of Buri's understanding of grace is given by John Macquarrie:

'... although grace is given with existence and so belongs to me, Buri maintains that the working of such grace is experienced as a gift. It conduces to authentic existence, which I recognise as something which is not at my disposal but is presented to me. In this experience I understand myself as created and elected, and as related to a transcendence which meets me as a personal God... God is seen to be the author of grace, but he confers it not as a saving act such as the kerygma proclaims, but in man's original endowment of existence.' 4

¹ Kerygma und Mythos. II, p.97.

² Kerygma und Mythos. III, p.89.

³ Kerygma und Mythos. II, p.97.

⁴ The Scope of De-mythologising, p. 146. For a full and careful criticism of Buri's view of grace see also pp. 142-151.

Buri's view is one which presents us with some quite serious difficulties. For one thing it comes very close to Tertullian's anima naturaliter christiana¹ which with Buri seems to imply that what is required of man is an awareness of and an awakening to his own innate possibilities. This becomes rather more apparent in the light of Buri's dependence upon the philosophy, or the philosophical faith of Karl Jaspers,² who along with Buri can attach no special significance to a once-for-all Beilagschehen. However this is not the place for a full-scale exposition or criticism of these views. For the moment it is nevertheless worth noting that although there appears to be no direct or immediate link between Buri's understanding of grace as a primordial endowment of existence and that of Schweitzer, there is certainly an echo here of Schweitzer's statement that 'the impulse towards perfection is innate in us'.³

The second element in Buri's theology which requires some preliminary clarification is his understanding of mythology.

In one place he refers to the mythology of the New Testament as 'a powerfully symbolic expression of the self-understanding of authentic existence'.⁴ With reference to the role which myth must

¹ De Testimonio Animae, Ambrosiana Library, Vol. I, pp. 37ff.

² See e.g. Jaspers' essay, Wahrheit und Unheil der Bultmannschen Entmythologisierung, in Kerygma und Mythos III, especially p. 42. (This essay may also be found in English in Myth and Christianity, especially p. 50f.) Here Jaspers refers to 'man's God-created inborn nobility' (nobilitas ingenua), which he equates with the Pauline 'Christ in me'.

³ See note 3, p. 62 of this chapter.

⁴ Kerygma und Mythos, Vol. II, p. 99.

play he writes: 'How could we speak about the last things without myths? It would be a sign of the poverty of our generation if we were to allow this world of images (Bildervelt) to vanish.'¹ And the myth which he understands to be central to the New Testament is described in the following terms:

'In the sea of mythological ideas and images there are but a few really great Redeemer-myths which may be compared with that which is presented to us in the eschatological Christ. They emerge from the unconscious as archetypes, in the supreme moments of humanity they are formulated by prophets, then they grow from generation to generation until they too become old and die.'²

From these remarks alone it can be seen that Buri ascribes a very positive role to mythology. Like Bultmann, he agrees that it is necessary to interpret mythology in terms of the understanding of existence which is contained in it and which it portrays. Where he differs from Bultmann is in his refusal to translate mythology into formal philosophical concepts, especially the existential concepts of Heidegger. This he regards as necessary not only because there can be no religious language without images, but because myth as such has an inherently unique power. Distinguishing Buri's position from that of Bultmann Jaspers writes:

'Buri admits candidly that the redemptive history is no more than a myth. But he does not want to demythologise in order to destroy. While recognising that the language of religion is mythical through and through, Buri asserts its validity as a language, and tries with its help to gain an awareness of our beliefs, moral duties, hopes and goals.'³

¹Kerygma und Mythos, Vol.II, p. 99.

²Theologie der Existenz, p. 121.

³Kerygma und Mythos III, p.40. (Myth and Christianity, pp. 47-48.)

It is doubtful whether this statement really does justice to Bultmann's position.¹ At any rate the difference between them is reasonably clear, for what Buri seems to wish to convey is that myth, although it is to be understood and interpreted existentially, must nevertheless be allowed to do its own work. This is because it also has a power quite peculiar to itself which is able to evoke a profound awareness in man that the mode of existence which the myth portrays is one which in fact corresponds to that authentic existence which man already possesses, which is already there and given by virtue of the grace with which he is primordially endowed. It somehow points to the fact that this eschatological mode of existence is one in which by nature he already participates. Thus myth does not simply confront man with an image of that authentic existence which he is already striving to attain. It does more. It is as though myth were a focus of almost irresistible attraction, a kind of magnetic pole which has the power to elicit man's response to his true self, the 'graced' self, so that not only does he come alive to the 'Christ in him' but is also made alive by the 'Christ in him'.² From Buri's point of view this is something which the conceptual language of philosophy cannot achieve. It cannot call from deep to deep as does the language of myth.

With these clarifications in mind we may now turn to Buri's approach to the problem of history, an approach which is very closely related to this preceding outline.

¹ Bultmann has stated that his aim is not to destroy or eliminate mythological statements but to interpret them. See e.g. Jesus Christ and Mythology, p.18.

² Cf. Kerygma und Mythos, Vol.III, p.89.

Any sketch of his understanding of history must however of necessity be somewhat brief because Buri in fact has very little to say about it qua problem. Indeed in much of his work he has been more concerned to point out that history need not be a problem for theology at all, and his own theology quite clearly indicates that faith, or authentic existence, has very little to do with the historical particularity of Christianity. In this respect at least it seems that he adopts Schweitzer's position that if we have to do with any Jesus at all, then it must be with a Jesus who is 'absolutely independent of historical knowledge'.¹ Buri considers the problem of historical particularity to be a kind of cul-de-sac from which faith must finally be set free. The view that faith should not be dependent upon the researches of the historians may be one which can be accepted only with certain qualifications, but it is a principle which Buri follows with dogged consistency and in doing so manages to make his point. However, it may be asked whether the price he has to pay in order to free faith from any particular history and thus make it perhaps more philosophically respectable is not too high.

With reference to the New Testament Buri can say that the entire Christian story is a dramatic presentation of 'the intense awareness of existence as grace'.²

¹ See note 5, p.61.

² Kerygma und Mythos, III, p.90. This corresponds very closely to Schweitzer's interpretation of Parousia-expectation.

Elsewhere he refers to the 'eschatological Christ-myth of the New Testament.'¹ He takes the view that the entire New Testament story has the status of myth and that its value lies in the power of this myth to give expression to and also to evoke the self-understanding which is the mark of authentic existence.² Thus Buri's 'theology of existence' is nourished not by any once-for-all salvation event, but by the authentic self-understanding which is implicit within existence itself.³ If the whole of the New Testament is given the status of myth then salvation need not be dependent upon an event which is einmalig geschichtlich.⁴

This does not seem to mean that Buri would go as far as to say that there was no Jesus, nor, less radically, would he be likely to deny that the New Testament is in fact concerned with a particular history. This is quite in keeping with the view of the Consistent School which can dispense with the Jesus of history because the eschatological dogma by which he was determined is now a thing of the past.⁵ And one of the most

¹Theologie der Existenz, p.75, p.121.

²See Kerygma und Mythos, II, p.99, where criticising Bultmann for his retention of the kerygma Buri writes: '... befreit von jedem falschen kerygmatischen Anspruch kann jetzt die Mythologie des N.T.s wahrhaft existential verstanden werden, d.h.als symbolkräftiger Ausdruck des Selbstverständnisses eigentlicher Existenz, an dem mir in Wahrheit ein entsprechendes neues Selbstverständnis meiner selbst aufgehen kann'.

³Theologie der Existenz, p.63.

⁴Kerygma und Mythos, II, p.97.

⁵See page 61 above.

important consequences of this fundamental presupposition is that for Buri, theology is now set free to be a theology of existence. History may be regarded as being of secondary importance because salvation is grounded in human existence in its relation to transcendence and therefore requires no reference to any particular history.¹

Therefore he can go on to say:

'We no longer need feel alarmed that historical research may deprive us of something which is irreplaceable. Nor is it necessary for us either consciously or unconsciously, openly or covertly, to evade or to distort the methods and the results of historical research.'²

The eschatological Heilsgeschehen is to be found neither in nor through any particular history. Rather, the salvation event occurs whenever

'... man in his authenticity understands himself in the way in which this has been brought to expression in the Christ-myth.'³

Faith is thus set free from any illusion or false assumption that its reality is irrevocably bound up with a particular history. As myth, or as symbol, the New Testament story has a permanently timeless quality. It possesses an inherent power to evoke man's response to the true Selbstverständnis which it exemplifies and the power to call man to participate in the authentic mode of existence which it supremely portrays.

¹ In his Scope of Demythologising, p.138, Macquarrie writes: 'Presumably unlike some earlier writers ... Buri does in fact believe that there is some historical substratum to the myth, and that there actually was a Jesus of Nazareth around whom the myth grew up. But that is not of the slightest importance from his point of view.' For a criticism of the older 'Christ-Myth' theories, e.g. of A. Drews and J.M. Robertson, see H.G. Wood's Did Christ really live?

² Kerygma und Mythos, II, p.100.

³ Kerygma und Mythos, II, p.97.

As such it may therefore be safely detached from the history which gave rise to it and so perform its proper function quite independently of it.

These views and some of the further consequences which Buri's position entails regarding history may now be summed up. For one thing, by being no longer bound to or determined by any particular event in history, faith, or authentic existence becomes a universal and inherently human possibility.¹ Buri's view also implies that Christ is the supreme instance of authentic existence rather than the substance or ground of authentic existence, or, more traditionally, the ground of faith. His position is therefore also one which provides a fairly convenient and comfortable perspective from which it may be asserted that faith is now securely defended from the shifting uncertainties of the historical and rendered invulnerable to the researches of the historians.

With reference to this last point, Rudolf Bultmann has been able to say much the same thing with his emphasis on the 'mere That' of the historicity of Jesus.² However bare and formal this Daas may be for Bultmann, it is at least historical. However, for Buri, it would appear that even the formal 'That' is essentially a work of historical supererogation and quite superfluous for faith. For although it may well be the case that the 'eschatological Christ-myth' arose from within the context of certain historical events, its significance is no longer in any way dependent upon them. In order to retain its power and significance it must rather

¹Kerygma und Mythos, Vol. III, p.90.

²Cf. e.g., Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus, p. 9f.

be disengaged from the history in which it originally arose.

It may therefore be said that for Buri history does not present a problem in any real sense. And perhaps it would not necessarily amount to an overstatement or distortion of his position if it were suggested that his view would be equally valid if Jesus were in fact a fictitious or a mythical being like one of the gods of Homer.

The quite positive role which Buri assigns to mythology leads to one final and rather puzzling aspect with regard to his approach to history. In the attempt to go beyond Bultmann, Buri wishes not only to demythologise, but also to de-kerygmatisise, because the kerygma, as the proclamation of God's act of salvation in Jesus Christ must also be defined as mythology.¹ To such a 'remnant' of mythology Buri can assign no positive function whatever. Thus while in one sense he finds it possible to give a positive evaluation of mythology as long as it may be set free from any historical event or series of events and so rendered less problematic, the mythology which is bound to any particular history is a mythology for which he can find no place. Therefore it is obvious that it is not mythology as such which proves to be a source of embarrassment for him, but history, the history through which the kerygma arose and to which it refers.

Perhaps this amounts to little more than a lack of clarity in Buri's position. However to be really consistent one would have to say that there is a hidden tendency here not so much to demythologise or to de-kerygmatisise, but rather to de-historicise in an attempt to overcome,

¹Cf. *Kerygma und Mythos*, II, p.96, where Buri refers to the kerygma as 'ein letzter Rest von inkonsequenterweise noch festgehaltener Mythologie'.

to use Gerhard Kittel's phrase, 'the scandal of historical particularity'.¹

Turning now from history to the related problem of eschatology it may be noted that Buri's basic views have changed very little since the position which he put forward in a much earlier book.²

Here Buri takes up the apocalyptic notion of the two Aeons. These correspond to the dualism of meaninglessness on the one hand, and on the other, the possibility for creating meaning or giving meaning. (Sinnermöglichkeit).³ The basis for meaningful action is reverence for the creation and for life.⁴ An eschatological event occurs each time a concrete decision is made on the basis of this awareness.⁵ Whenever one acts in accordance with this principle and suffers for it the old Aeon gives way to the new.⁶ Paradoxically, Buri states that one may attain to the ideal of perfection and yet at the same time one may not. Nevertheless, although the goal of perfection is not wholly within man's power or under his control, it is the eschatological possibility given with and in creation and in the inherent grace of human existence. To stand within this possibility is to be 'in Christ'.⁷ Buri understands Jesus as the one

¹G. Kittel, The Jesus of History, in Evangelium Christi, edited by G.K.A. Bell and A. Deissmann, p. 31ff.

²Die Bedeutung der neutestamentlichen Eschatologie für die neuere protestantische Theologie, 1935.

³Op.cit., pp. 171-172.

⁴Op.cit., p. 169.

⁵Op.cit., p. 168.

⁶Op.cit., p. 170.

⁷Op.cit., pp. 170-171. See also Buri's essay, Der existentielle Charakter des Konsequent-Eschatologischen Jesus Verstandnisses Albert Schweitzers in Zusammenhang mit der heutigen Debatte zwischen Bultmann, Barth und Jaspers in Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben, Essays in honour of Albert Schweitzer on his eightieth birthday, pp. 44-58 and especially pp. 47-48.

who found meaning as a schöpfungsmässige Möglichkeit amidst the meaninglessness of the world, a possibility which in principle and in fact is open to all men. Jesus is to be understood therefore as the supreme embodiment of the will to perfection, or, expressed in the terminology of his more recent theology of existence, as the timeless symbol of authentic existence.

The criticisms which have been suggested with regard to Schweitzer's interpretation of eschatology are equally appropriate in Buri's case.¹ However Buri does raise the problem of the relation between history and eschatology in a much clearer and more acute form than Schweitzer.

Like Schweitzer, there is no doubt that Buri can find no place for an eschatology which is descriptive of God's decisive act in Christ which alone makes authentic existence possible. If authentic existence, not only in principle but also in fact, is a universal human possibility then reference to any particular, eschatological saving event is no longer necessary. The 'eschatological Christ-myth' is for Buri the valid mythological or symbolic form which can properly give expression to this universal human possibility. Its real value lies not so much in its power to express the way in which existence may be eschatologically transcended and authentic existence graciously conferred through Christ, but in its power to express the way in which existence as such can transcend itself from within in its movement towards fulfilment or perfection or in its search for self-realisation. Thus by means of this pure mythology or symbolism Buri is able to overcome the difficult problem of historical particularity which has always been integral to

¹ Cf. pp. 60-63 above.

the christian tradition. Not only on these grounds may it be suggested that the price which he pays for a theology of existence is rather too high, but also because of the same basic difficulty which was apparent in the position of Schweitzer. As with Schweitzer, Buri abruptly severs any possible correspondence between Jesus as historical event and Jesus as the eschatological symbol and history and eschatology are left to lead separate existences.

The erratic boulders in an otherwise uniform landscape help to concentrate the sight, if not the mind, most wonderfully. Our examination of the views of the Consistent School relevant to our theme may not have actually demonstrated the truth of this sub-thesis but it may nevertheless be said that this school of thought occupies such a place among the many approaches to our problem.

Despite the criticisms which have been suggested of Schweitzer's proposed solution to the problem of history and eschatology, and despite the difficulties we have encountered in Buri's extremely stimulating development of Schweitzer's position, the approach of the Consistent School is one which deserves to be treated with more serious consideration than it is often accorded. It is one thing to dismiss Schweitzer as a bad exegete and admit him as an excellent organist. It is quite another thing for that reason alone to deny him his rightful place as one who has raised the principal question of our theme in a very acute form, a question which has troubled theology ever since. Buri's re-formulation of that question in a more contemporary fashion and the answer to it which he suggests demonstrate that the tradition of the Consistent School is still very much alive and worthy of careful study.

There are some similarities between the views of the Consistent School, especially those of Buri, and those offered in the previous chapter. Most of these resolve themselves into the one possible similarity between Buri's Christ-myth and our suggestion that No Eschatos may be viewed as the last paradigm. There is a basic difference nevertheless in that we would wish to emphasise that the life which checks the myth or the paradigm was historically cruciform. Buri's views would seem to be able to support themselves without this assertion. Of course the same may well be silently implicit in Buri's position as well. However, if he were to make it more explicit there can be little doubt that he would immediately find the problem of the past much more complicated than he apparently does, and the viability of his theology of existence would consequently be seriously impaired.

If, on the other hand, Buri had argued that the Christ-myth is not present apart from or in abstraction from its having found historical embodiment we might have been able to agree with him much more readily. Perhaps even if he had suggested that the significance of the Christ-event presents itself in the form of an image, (or paradigm, as we have attempted to argue), or even in the form of a myth inseparable from its having been cast up by its historical eventfulness some closer agreement might again have been possible. Our essential difficulty however is that Buri's whole position is specifically designed to avoid such possibilities and rests ultimately, as we have noted,¹ on the initial presupposition that myths as archetypes have no necessarily particular relation to history.

¹ See note 2, p.68, above.

It has been therefore suggested that with regard to the position of the Consistent School, the discovery of a violent disparity between historical event and eschatological symbol would apparently prove insufficient to disturb its later dependence upon a Christ-myth theory. That such a disparity could exist or be discovered is a possibility which does not seem unduly to trouble those who have adopted and developed the implications of this particular initial presupposition. This in turn has conveniently relieved them of the necessary burden of historical enquiry. Either that, or they have been content to receive Schweitzer's dogmatically pre-determined historical discoveries as final, and apart from some relatively minor differences and a few slight alterations are prepared to leave it at that.

With regard then to our problem of correlation between the historical Jesus and he Eschaton those of the Consistent School might possibly react with the suggestion that for these reasons, and probably for others as well, our journey is really quite unnecessary. Since any attempt to detect and expose a correlation between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith presumably therefore appears to them to be an unnecessary undertaking, then what they seem to regard as the more secondary problem, namely, as to whether such a correlation is at all possible, may on this view be considered to be the sort of question which really need not arise at all.

It is this problem which we shall continue to pursue in the following chapter in our discussion of C.H. Dodd's understanding of history and his notion of Realised Eschatology. We shall attempt to discover whether his understanding of the relation between history and eschatology helps to clarify or enlarge some of the issues which have been discussed so far, and whether or not he is able to provide a more satisfactory solution to this very difficult problem.

Appendix

No exposition of the views of the Consistent School would be complete without at least a few remarks on the work of Martin Werner and his place within it.

In his book, Die Entstehung des christlichen Dogmas,¹ Werner applies the principle of consistent eschatology in seeking to answer the question: 'To what degree were there implicit in primitive Christianity those elements which caused that faith to be transformed in the post-apostolic period into early catholicism?'² His answer to this question, quite briefly, is that the step from eschatology to early Christian dogma is the result of the delay and non-occurrence of the Parousia. Dogma begins to replace the eschatological faith as a kind of Erzatslösung.

He takes up Schweitzer's emphasis upon the late-Jewish apocalyptic context in which early Christianity arose. It is this historical discovery which can provide confidence in the historical trustworthiness of the Synoptic tradition. That both Jesus and Paul were dominated by the expectation of the future Parousia is a historical fact. And it is this fact which provides a definitive criterion of historicity for any proper evaluation of the sources. This is a criterion which is derived 'not from the subjective surmises of the historians, but is tendered by the source-texts themselves'.³ As a method, Form-Criticism must be

¹First German Edition, 1941, Second Edition, 1954.
English translation, The Formation of Christian Dogma, 1957.

²The Formation of Christian Dogma, p.3.

³Op.cit., p.15.

rejected because it possesses no such objective criterion so that its historical evaluation of the texts is quite arbitrary.¹ Further, by applying the principle of consistent eschatology a satisfactory answer to the problem of the Messianic consciousness of Jesus is found. That he understood himself in this way may be concluded from the texts themselves and from his inaccessa verba.

Werner writes that 'the heart of the problem lay in the fact that, in consequence of the delay of the Parousia, a contradiction between the eschatological scheme and the actual course of history began to be apparent'.² This is no doubt the case, and it is true that the delay of the Parousia became a source of embarrassment to the early church. On the other hand it can hardly be asserted that the result of this was a subsequent post-Pauline de-eschatologising. The re-interpretation of eschatology begins with Paul himself.³ If Pauline eschatology began by being Parousia-centred, and though he may have retained the notion of the Parousia as an element in his teaching to the very end, at the same time he also presents an eschatology which is re-interpreted in terms of the Christ-event. Therefore if the post-Pauline situation is characterised by a tendency to de-eschatologise, this process could not simply have consisted in a uniform step by step reduction and rejection of the eschatological dogma, but also of the re-formulation and re-interpretation of eschatology which

¹The Formation of Christian Dogma, p.12.

²Op.cit., p.22.

³Cf. e.g. Gal.4:4; II Cor.4:17; 6:2.

Paul had already offered. This is one of the difficulties in Werner's thesis, and it is a difficulty which arises from the more fundamental assumption that Paul's thought and action were completely dominated by the eschatological dogma. What Paul in fact presents us with, and to some extent the Synoptic Gospels themselves, is not a consistent or thoroughgoing apocalypticism, but an apocalyptic which has been modified in the light of the Christ-event.

The second main difficulty with Werner's position is one which has already been encountered and dealt with in our discussion of Schweitzer, namely, the problems which are involved when history is made to conform to a principle or to what is taken to be an objective and definitive criterion of historicity. The criticisms which have already been suggested of the conclusions which Schweitzer reached by means of this method may also with justification be made of Werner.¹

¹Cf. pp. 53-57.

CHAPTER FOUR : HISTORY AND REALISED ESCHATOLOGY

C.H. Dodd

CHAPTER FOUR

REALISED ESCHATOLOGY

The question of history and the question of its relationship to eschatology are interdependent. In more recent years another very important evaluation of this very difficult problem has been put forward by C.H. Dodd. The substance of his views are to be found in such books as The Parables of the Kingdom,¹ The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments, and History and the Gospel.³ Each of these books in its own way focuses upon the mutual involvement of these two questions. They also provide the foundation for Dodd's very distinctive interpretation of New Testament eschatology as a Realised Eschatology, an interpretation which contributed a great many fruitful insights to the discussion of this whole problem at a time when New Testament scholars, though on the whole very critical of Schweitzer's views, found themselves nevertheless in some difficulty as to the problem of just how to move beyond them. Dodd's work is therefore of some considerable importance as an implicit criticism of Schweitzer's

¹ Nisbet, London, 1935.

² Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1936.

³ Nisbet, London, 1938.

views. However, although it would be interesting to explore further the differences between Dodd's position and that of Schweitzer, here we shall be concerned mainly with Dodd himself and with an exposition and evaluation of his views.

Dodd deals chiefly with the problem of the relation between history and revelation, or, to put this in terms more suitable to the present discussion, the problem of the relation between historical events and eschatological events.

His views on this matter are extremely important. As a New Testament critic he is very much aware of some of the difficulties which immediately arise when Christianity is described as a historical religion, and he may with justification be credited with having opened the way for a renewed interest and a re-examination of some of the problems which such a statement involves, at least as far as English-speaking New Testament scholarship is concerned.

In order to present his views as fairly as possible, it will be necessary to quote them at some considerable length. We shall concentrate first of all on Dodd's understanding of history mainly as it is presented in his History and the Gospel.

I

Dodd's view of History:

Dodd begins by making a distinction between the idea of revelation in nature religion and mysticism on the one hand, and in Christianity on the other. While Christianity may well adopt into its own scheme the modes of revelation which are integral to the former, it is nevertheless to be carefully distinguished from both nature religion and mysticism

because

'if it is to be characterised by its classical documents, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, (it) finds in history the primary field of divine revelation, because it is the field of divine action.'¹

Therefore, as distinct from both natural religion and mysticism the view which is held by Christianity is that

'the eternal God is revealed in history.'²

Following this rather broad distinction Dodd now goes on to make some further more specific points.

With the affirmation that God is revealed in history, Christianity does not intend to suggest that God or the action of God is to be discerned in any striking or significant historical event. Nor is the Christian understanding of God's revelation in history to be equated with a philosophy of history. Christianity does not share the view

'that the truth about God can be discovered by treating history as a uniform field of observation (like the 'nature' studied by the sciences), in which it is possible to collect data from all parts of the field and arrive by induction at a conclusion.'³

However attractive and apparently convincing certain evolutionary or dialectical philosophies of history may be, the Christian must exercise extreme caution and be constantly on his guard in his approach to them, for as far as the Christian is concerned, a properly Christian philosophy of history

'starts from the Christian valuation of a particular set of facts.'⁴

¹ History and the Gospel, p.23.

² Op.cit., p.23.

³ Op.cit., p.24.

⁴ Op.cit., p.25.

Dodd now goes on to explain what he understands by this evaluation and begins by giving a more precise definition of what he means by history.

He writes:

'Before we can speak of history, even in the most rudimentary sense, there must be events which possess an interest and a meaning for at least a group of individuals, who for the sake of that interest and meaning remember them, recall them in conversation, hand them on by oral tradition, or finally record them for a wider circle. History in the full sense consists of events which possess not merely a private but a public interest, and a meaning which is related to broad and permanent concerns of human society...

Much of what follows is also essential to Dodd's argument and is therefore worth quoting in full. He continues:

'Thus historical writing is not merely a record of occurrences as such. It is, at least implicitly, a record of the interest and meaning which they bore for those who took part in them or were affected by them at a greater or smaller distance in space and time... We might indeed say that an historical 'event' is an occurrence PLUS the interest and meaning which the occurrence possessed for the persons involved in it, and by which the record is determined.'

Dodd then goes on to explain what he means by this as follows:

...'the events which make up history are relative to the human mind which is active in these events. The feelings and judgements of the human mind enter into the process. To ask whether the occurrence or the mind which is active in it is the prior determining factor, is to ask a question which cannot be answered, for history as it is given is an inseparable unity of both, in events.'

And since this is the case, it follows

...'that a series of events is most truly apprehended and recorded when it is apprehended in some measure from within the series and not from an entirely detached standpoint.'

Dodd now goes on to apply these principles and this more precise definition to the New Testament records. He also suggests that if we

¹Op.cit., pp. 26-27.

²Op.cit., p.28.

³Op.cit., p.28.

examine our own experience we may quite easily be able to perceive how some events or even some particular series of events, are of much greater significance and meaning to us than others. In a similar way, this is also true of any genuinely historical religion, Dodd continues, by the fact that it

... 'attaches itself not to the whole temporal series indifferently, nor yet to any casual event, but to a particular series of events in which a unique intensity resides... and since one particular event exceeds another in significance, there may well be an event which is uniquely significant, and this event may give a unique character to the whole series to which it belongs.'¹

According to Dodd, this is what is especially true of the Bible. It refers to a particular sequence of historical events in which may be discerned the action of God. And the series of events which it records

'is controlled by the supreme event of all - the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.'²

The central affirmation of the biblical record is therefore that in this event the ultimate reality and the ultimate meaning of all history is revealed. All that the prophets and the apocalyptists had expected from the future has now become realised experience. In order to express this the New Testament appropriates the general eschatological scheme of the biblical record and transforms it with the declaration that the expected event or events have actually already taken place. The purpose which was in process of being disclosed in the history of Israel is now fulfilled and

... 'the events which constitute that fulfilment - the coming of Christ, his death and resurrection, are eschatological events

¹Op.cit., pp.29-30.

²Op.cit., p.30

in the full sense; that is to say, they are not simply important events, not even the most important events in the series, but unique and final events, in which the God beyond history intervened conclusively to reveal His Kingdom on earth.¹

These statements with regard to his approach to the problem of history will be the ones which will concern us most in our discussion of Dodd's position.

We may note however, that he also speaks of history in a rather different sense when he describes it as a process of redemption and revelation. History in this sense, Dodd writes:

'... has a beginning and an end, both in God. The beginning is not an event in time; the end is not an event in time. The beginning is God's purpose, the end is the fulfilment of his purpose. Between these lies the sacred history which culminates in the death and resurrection of Christ.'²

Judging by this statement and by the views outlined above, Dodd really seems to be speaking about history in three different ways. There is first of all the history which consists in the fact, for example, that Brutus stabbed Caesar, plus the meaning of this event. Secondly, there is also a history of a special kind with regard to Christ. And there is also a history which might be termed God's Heilsgeschichte. Unfortunately, Dodd himself does not clarify these distinctions nor explain them further.

Finally, there is yet one other aspect of Dodd's argument which is of considerable importance, namely, his view that to this history there also belongs the Church as that body which shares in and is part of this fulfilment of history. And in connection with this also, Dodd adds elsewhere that the emergence of the Church and the fact of its triumph and progress in history are to be taken as signs that its beliefs were sound, that its

¹Op.cit., p. 35.

²Op.cit., p. 171.

existence in history acts as one of the proofs of the truth and trustworthiness of the record and witness upon which it was founded.¹

This view of history which has been outlined above stands in the closest possible relation to Dodd's interpretation of the eschatology of the New Testament as a Realised Eschatology. In order to clarify further what Dodd understands by the eschatological revelation of the kingdom of God and how his interpretation of eschatology corresponds to this view of history which he has put forward, we shall examine his Parables of the Kingdom and try to discover how he works this out.

Having made his evaluation of the relation between history and eschatology as clear as possible we shall then go on to point out where some of the main difficulties and inadequacies of his view lie.

However, before going on to give an outline of Dodd's Realised Eschatology, one or two very brief remarks may first of all be made with regard to his approach to the problem of history. At the same time, this will also enable us to give a preliminary indication of the main problems which his position involves.

The axis upon which Dodd's whole argument turns is his definition of an historical event as 'an occurrence plus the interest and meaning which the occurrence possessed for the persons involved in it, and by which the record is determined'.² This definition raises at least two important problems which will be dealt with in more detail later once we have examined Dodd's interpretation of eschatology.

¹The Bible Today, e.g. pp. 71, 77, 103.

²History and the Gospel, pp. 26-27.

For one thing, this definition makes a fairly strict distinction between events and meanings, or between facts and meanings. To put this in a slightly different way, Dodd, as we shall see, seems to be saying that there are certain historical facts which are at the same time eschatological facts, or that the meaning of a certain set of facts is eschatological. Once we have discussed his interpretation of eschatology what we shall have to ask with reference to the way in which Dodd works this out, is whether or not he actually severs the relation between history and eschatology.

Secondly, the definition refers to the interest or meaning which an historical event possesses for the persons involved in it. This is to imply that the true significance of the events with which the New Testament is concerned can be properly grasped and understood only by those who were actually most directly involved in those events, and whose experience determined the record which was later to be formed in order to preserve the memory of those events in which they had participated. This clearly suggests that those who are most immediately involved in any sequence of historical events are the best interpreters and judges of those events. Such a position also includes the assumption that the reports of eye-witnesses must be accepted as being the most trustworthy and reliable.

These are two of the main difficulties which Dodd's understanding of history implies and it will be necessary to deal with them in more detail below. We may now turn to an examination of Dodd's Realised Eschatology.

II

Realised Eschatology:

In the work of C.H. Dodd the term 'realised eschatology' first occurs in the writings of 1935. It was during the mid-thirties that he developed his view of history and applied it to the documents of the New Testament. His interpretation of eschatology was worked out in conjunction with the understanding of history which has been outlined above and may be said to be complementary to it.¹

We intend to deal with Dodd's view mainly in the terms in which he has presented it in The Parables of the Kingdom,² and in The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments.³

His thesis is that realised eschatology is the basic presupposition for the interpretation and understanding of the ministry of Jesus. In The Parables of the Kingdom, after having given an exegetical demonstration which 'proves' that the kingdom of God has come, Dodd writes:

¹Dodd's earlier work, e.g., his commentary on Romans, also shows a tendency towards the very distinctive interpretation of eschatology which he was to develop more fully within the next few years. In his much later book, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, he admits that the term 'realised eschatology' is somewhat inadequate, (cf. p. 447, note 1). He notes some of the suggested emendations to the term, for example, Georges Florovsky's 'inaugurated eschatology', and J. Jeremias' sich realisierende Eschatologie, the latter being a term which he accepts in preference to his own. (For the views of J. Jeremias see his revised edition of The Parables of Jesus, especially p. 230.)

²Passages cited here are taken from the 1936 edition.

³Passages quoted here are from the 1944 edition.

'This declaration that the kingdom of God has come necessarily dislocates the whole eschatological scheme in which its expected coming closes the long vista of the future. The eschaton has moved from the future to the present, from the sphere of expectation to that of realised experience.'¹

And he continues:

'Here is the fixed point from which our interpretation of the teaching of the kingdom of God must start. It represents the ministry of Jesus as 'realised eschatology', that is to say, as the impact upon this world of the 'powers of the world to come' in a series of events, unprecedented and unrepeatable, now in actual process.'²

In Jesus' ministry

'God is confronting men in his Kingdom, power and glory. This world has become the scene of a divine drama. It is the hour of decision. It is realised eschatology.'³

It is Paul who is the first to give a theology of this realised eschatology. Dodd writes:

'It is in the epistles of Paul...that full justice is done for the first time to the principle of realised eschatology which is vital to the whole kerygma. The super-natural order of life which the apocalyptists had depicted in terms of pure fantasy is now described as an actual fact of experience.'⁴

The writer of the Fourth Gospel carries out the same principle with an even more thoroughgoing consistency when he deliberately subordinates the futurist eschatology of the early church to a realised eschatology.⁵ And Dodd says further:

¹The Parables of the Kingdom, p. 50.

²Op.cit., p. 51.

³Op.cit., p. 198.

⁴The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments, p. 65.

⁵Op.cit., p. 66.

'...for the New Testament writers in general, the eschaton has entered history...the age to come has come. The Gospel of primitive Christianity is a Gospel of realised eschatology.'¹

In order to interpret the eschatology of the New Testament as realised eschatology, one of the most pressing problems which have to be dealt with is the problem of apocalyptic. The futurist elements in the traditional eschatological mythology have to be refined away. This is one of the first obstacles which Dodd tackles in developing the idea of a realised eschatology, and it is in his handling of this problem that he implicitly rejects the 'consistent eschatology' of Albert Schweitzer.²

Dodd's principal objection to apocalyptic is that it is little more than a way of speaking which is employed to give expression to that frame of mind

... 'which seeks a form of compensation in fantasy for the sense of futility and defeat.'³

¹ The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments, p. 85.

² In a preface to the 1960 edition of The Parables of the Kingdom Dodd describes how he approached the problem of eschatology through the work of Albert Schweitzer. Dodd writes: 'My work began by being oriented to the problem as Schweitzer had stated it. In common with many others ... I found myself unconvinced by his own formula of Konsequente Eschatologie.' The second motive which led Dodd to re-examine the parables was his interest in the historical content of the Gospels. He continues: '...there are some signs that the extreme reaction against "historicism" has abated, and that the "quest of the historical Jesus" may be resumed. It is my submission that the parables, critically treated, become of our most important sources for a knowledge of the historical career of Jesus Christ, especially in respect of the motives behind it and the issues it raised.' The Parables of the Kingdom, Collins Fontana edition, 1960, p.8.

³ New Testament Studies, The Mind of Paul II, pp. 126-127.

In doing so, apocalyptic denies the present order of the world;

'apocalyptic eschatology', writes Dodd:

...'implies a radical devaluation of the present world order in all its aspects.'¹

Jesus however, though historically and culturally part of the apocalyptic milieu and to some extent inevitably determined by that tradition, radically transforms its way of thinking. He is by no means the inflexible apocalypticist whom Schweitzer depicts. And the way in which this transformation of apocalyptic comes about is to be discerned most particularly in the parables where there is to be discovered

...'this sense of the divineness of the natural order (which) is the major premise of all the parables, and it is the point where Jesus differs most profoundly from the outlook of the Jewish apocalypticists.'²

By contrast to the otherworldliness of apocalyptic with its now violent, now restrained depictions of the time to come which will mean paradise for some and judgement for others, Dodd holds that one of the main implications of the thought of Jesus (and of Paul) requires

...'a recognition of the natural goodness, of the relative value of human institutions, and of the possibility of taking them up into the christian life.'³

Dodd's second objection to apocalyptic is its excessive emphasis

¹New Testament Studies, The Mind of Paul II, p. 113.

²The Parables of the Kingdom, p. 22.

³New Testament Studies, The Mind of Paul, II, p. 118. It may be recalled that in presenting his view of history Dodd warned against the seductiveness of evolutionary philosophies of history. It could be argued, however, that the above statement might be understood in an evolutionary sense, or at least might be compatible with the idea of progress in history.

on the future.

'An exclusive concentration of attention upon glory to come, with the corresponding devaluation of the present, its duties and opportunities, its social claims and satisfactions, obscures the finer and more humane aspects of morality.'¹

This is the historical vacuum which is inevitably left by an apocalyptic which can assert

... 'the mighty hand of the Lord in the events of the remote past, and (that it) will again be seen in the future, but in the present the power of evil obscures it.'²

We must now turn to consider the ways in which Dodd seeks to interpret these negative elements of apocalyptic.

He suggests that they may be discounted, first of all because they are not really christian at all. They still belong organically to that part of the Jewish tradition which has not yet come under the influence of the Gospel, which have not yet been baptised. The best example of this is to be found in the book of Revelation. Dodd says that the God described in this book

... 'can hardly be recognised as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, nor has the fierce Messiah... many traits that could recall Him of whom the primitive kerygma proclaimed that he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with him.'³

However, there are strong elements of apocalyptic to be found not only in the book of Revelation, but in the Gospels as well. Nevertheless, as we have seen, Jesus is understood to have refined the excesses of apocalyptic. In what way then does Dodd seek to interpret what we may

¹ The Apostolic Preaching, p. 64.

² Op.cit., p. 80.

³ Op.cit., p. 41.

now term the 'modified apocalyptic' of Jesus?

Dodd admits that there are predictive elements in the preaching of Jesus. Jesus refers to the future of the kingdom of God as well as to its presence in the world. Dodd deals with historical predictions, or predictions which are related to Jesus' role as a prophet, in terms of events which took place within the ministry of Jesus itself. On the other hand, as for the sayings which refer to a future which controls them all is the central and determining factor of the kingdom of God. Dodd writes:

'It is therefore significant that the idea of the kingdom of God has a central and controlling position in the teaching of Jesus which it has in no other body of religious teaching. With it are associated the traditional symbols for judgement and bliss, and, as the bearer and representative of the kingdom, the traditional and symbolic figure of the Son of Man. All these are 'eschatological' in character; they are ultimates, and are proper not to this empirical realm of time and space, but to the absolute order.'¹

This passage is quite crucial to Dodd's understanding of eschatology.

He continues as follows:

'But Jesus declares that this ultimate, the kingdom of God, has come into history, and he takes upon himself the 'eschatological' role of 'the Son of Man'. The absolute, the 'wholly other' has entered into time and space.'²

And elsewhere he writes:

'Eschatology is not itself the substance of the Gospel, but a form under which the absolute value of the Gospel facts is asserted.'³

These statements, and in particular this last one, bring into relief one of the principal problems involved in Dodd's position, a difficulty to which attention has already been drawn above, namely, the

¹ The Parables of the Kingdom, p. 107.

² Op.cit., p. 107.

³ The Apostolic Preaching, p. 42.

problem of the relation between historical facts and eschatology, between 'occurrence plus meaning', or, in the terms in which it is expressed in this last quotation, between 'Gospel facts' and 'absolute value'. This rather idealist way of speaking is of course not one which can be adopted today with the same ease as that with which Dodd clearly uses it. However, the difficulty with which we are concerned is not only this. There is also the problem of the more liberal theological implication that meanings or values may be appended to historical events in an external way, rather as one attaches a label to a sample of some chemical. This facility with which Dodd is able to move from historical facts to eschatological or absolute judgements about them is one of the problems which will have to be taken up again later.

The ease with which Dodd is able to do this is to a large extent explicable on the grounds that he finds a convenient Platonism in the New Testament which also enables him to interpret the apocalyptic eschatology. This brings us to his final proposal as to how it should be dealt with.

In Paul and John, and in the Letter to the Hebrews, a Platonic interpretation of history is presented with exactly this intention.

'In John's Gospel even more fully than in Paul, eschatology is sublimated into a distinctive kind of mysticism. Its underlying philosophy, like that of the Letter to the Hebrews, is of a Platonic cast...The ultimate reality, instead of being, as in Jewish apocalyptic, figured as the last term in the historical series, is conceived as an eternal order of being, of which the phenomenal order in history is the shadow or symbol. This eternal order is the kingdom of God, into which Christians have been born again, by water and the Spirit....This is the Johannine equivalent for...the Pauline declaration that if any man be in Christ he is a new creation.'

And of Hebrews Dodd says:

¹The Apostolic Preaching, pp. 66-67.

'In the Epistle to the Hebrews eschatology has been interpreted in terms of a Platonic scheme. The 'Age to come' is identified with that order of eternal reality whose shadows or reflections form the world of phenomena.'¹

Dodd also applies this principle of interpretation to the Synoptic Gospels with particular reference to the Son of Man figure. He writes:

'There is no coming of the Son of Man after his coming in Galilee and Jerusalem, whether soon or late, for there is no before or after in the eternal order...these future tenses are only an accommodation of language.'²

And as if summing up his position, with obvious approval Dodd writes:

'Time is', as Plato said, 'the moving image of eternity.'³

Dodd's Platonism, which is certainly spartan if we compare it with Bishop Gore's, becomes the principal key to the way in which he interprets the relation between history and eschatology.

III

Dodd's arguments have been outlined at some length because they raise some very important questions. We must now turn to the examination of some of the more important issues which his views imply and which may be critically examined within the scope of the wider problem of the theme which is under discussion.⁴

¹Op.cit., p. 45.

²The Parables of the Kingdom, p. 108.

³The Apostolic Preaching, pp. 87-88.

⁴For an excellent exposition and criticism of Dodd's view of history see T.A. Roberts' History and Christian Apologetic, especially pp. 80-113. As far as Roberts' own views are concerned, two criticisms might be suggested. One problem which might have been discussed more extensively in his exposition is that of the historicity of the historian. But secondly, and more important Roberts holds the view that historical events can have only one meaning. Is it not rather the case that the answers we receive by cross-examining historical texts will differ because of the different questions which may be put to them? Roberts further implies that the constructive task of historical criticism is positively to show what actually happened, (History and Christian Apologetic, p. 113). Thus despite his criticism of Ranke on p.38, it could be argued that the ghost of positivism still haunts his whole treatment of the subject. (For other pertinent criticisms of Dodd see also Ian T. Ramsey's Religious Language, pp. 99-103.)

For one thing, Dodd's position involves a problem of exegesis. The immediate purpose of this study however, is not the detailed investigation of the subtleties of textual criticism. Nevertheless, the famous debate between Dodd and J.Y. Campbell is one which should not simply be forgotten. The exegetical discussion is still in progress and will doubtlessly continue to be a subject of debate. It centres principally around Dodd's translation of the verbs ἐγγίζειν and φθάνειν, and the key texts in which these are used, namely, Mk. 1:15; Matt. 12:28; Lk. 11:20, all of which Dodd translates: 'The kingdom of God has come.'¹

¹In The Parables of the Kingdom Dodd writes: 'In the LXX, the perfect of the verb ἐγγίζειν is used to translate the Hebrew verb naga' and the Aramaic verb n'ta, both of which mean 'to reach', 'to arrive'. The same two verbs are also translated by the Aorist of the verb φθάνειν, which is used in Matt. 12:28; Lk. 11:20. It would appear therefore that no difference of meaning is intended between ἐφθασεν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, and ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. Both imply the 'arrival' of something which has hitherto been the object of expectation. We should translate both: 'The kingdom of God has come.' (p. 44).

Campbell's answer to this is to be found in The Expository Times, 48, 1936-37, pp. 91-94. As regards ἐγγίζειν, Campbell points out that in the perfect it is never used in the LXX to translate either naga or n'ta, but certain forms of the root gagab, which means 'to come near', 'to approach'. This was later corrected by Dodd in the third edition of The Parables of the Kingdom. In the New Testament, the perfect ἤγγικεν is normally to be translated 'has come near', or 'is at hand'. And Campbell concludes that this weight of evidence does not permit that Mk. 1:15 should be treated as an exception.

As regards ἐφθασεν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς, (Matt. 12:28; Lk. 11:20), Campbell points out that this verb is used to translate various forms of naga, n'ta and dabag, all of which gan mean 'to reach' or 'to arrive'. On the other hand the Aorist Indicative of φθάνειν has different shades of meaning according to the particular contexts in which it is found. It cannot therefore be exclusively translated as 'has arrived' or 'has come', but in fact in most instances, according to Campbell, must be rendered 'drew near', 'reached' (in the sense of 'came close to'). Campbell seeks only to point out that 'to reach' or 'to arrive at' is not the only meaning of φθάνειν. He also suggests that therefore the traditional rendering of Matt. 12:28 and Lk. 11:20, or at least a very close form of the original translations should be retained, e.g. 'the kingdom of God has come close upon you', or, taking into consideration the possibility that this could be a 'timeless' Aorist with a future reference, Campbell puts forward the possible translation: 'The kingdom of God will be upon you immediately'.

In support of Campbell see also J.H. Creed's article on the same

However, the problems cannot be set aside once the discussion of textual and grammatical intricacies has run its course. Nevertheless, a second line of criticism may be taken up, one which specifically involves Dodd's method of interpreting the parables. From this perspective we shall be able to draw together some of the strands of his arguments regarding the relation between history and eschatology and thus be in a more favourable position to view his interpretation of history and eschatology in their mutual involvement with one another.

As we have seen, Dodd regards the parables as being among the most important sources for a knowledge of the historical career of Jesus Christ.¹ The first step in Dodd's method of interpreting the parables requires that they should be understood in terms of 'the actual and critical situation in which Jesus' hearers stood.'² We may remind ourselves here that this corresponds to one of the points which Dodd made regarding the events with which the New Testament is concerned, namely, that there were some standing there in this actual situation who not only participated in the events but

these, *Op.cit.*, pp. 184-185, and K.W. Clark in *J.B.L.* 59, 1940, pp. 367-383, and more recently, W.G. Kümmel's *Promise and Fulfilment*, *Studies in Biblical Theology*, No. 23. Kümmel gathers all the arguments together and sums them up to the effect that if his interpretation of the kingdom is correct, then Dodd has made his point at the expense of the texts. Kümmel argues that if by ἔρχεσθαι the evangelists wished to express the idea of 'having come' then, '...they must have been guilty either of an extremely grave misunderstanding of Jesus' fundamental message concerning the coming of the kingdom of God or of an incomprehensible inconsistency in their use of words.' (Kümmel, *op.cit.* p. 24).

¹ See note 2, p. 93 above.

² The Parables of the Kingdom, p. 26.

were also responsible for later determining the record.

Dodd goes on to say that in the parables, the kingdom of God is proclaimed

'...not as something to come in the near future, but as a matter of present experience.'¹

Here we find Dodd in substantial agreement with the thesis of Rudolf Otto that it is not so much the case that Jesus brings the kingdom, but rather that the kingdom brings Jesus.² Thus if the kingdom is not imminent, and to be understood not as an event which is to come either in the near or in the distant future, but as present, and present as a matter of experience, then for one thing we are provided with an alternative to Schweitzer's 'consistent' interpretation, for as Dodd says:

'...the Eschaton has moved from the future to the present, from the sphere of expectation to that of realised experience.'³

Unlike Schweitzer's inflexible Jesus whose whole purpose and proclamation are oriented entirely toward the future Parousia, for Dodd, he is the One in whom the transcendent glory of the kingdom is manifested upon earth in a paradoxical way. The 'eternal order of being' is realised in this world in terms of realised eschatology, and in Jesus' own life and ministry, the kingdom, which for Dodd corresponds to the timeless, absolute order, is finally revealed and made manifest.⁴

¹Op.cit., p. 46.

²Reich Gottes und Menschensohn, p. 80; (ET. The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, p. 103).

³The Parables of the Kingdom, p. 50.

⁴Dodd does not in fact examine the idea of paradox very closely. It will be shown below where his understanding of paradox is somewhat deficient.

Nevertheless, this alternative has its own inherent difficulties.

Dodd's historical-critical position with regard to the parables is that they are to be treated as being among the most trustworthy and reliable sources for Jesus' historical career. If the kingdom of God is realised in Jesus' own ministry, and if the parables are to be interpreted in terms of realised eschatology, then clearly their Sitz im Leben is the life of Jesus. However, if the coming of the kingdom of God is to be identified with what Dodd repeatedly calls 'the facts of the ministry of Jesus',¹ then consequently, what Dodd in fact does is historicise the eschaton in these facts in such a way that his understanding of any paradoxical relationship between history and eschatology, or his reference to the paradoxical presence of the kingdom, is rendered effete. As E. Jüngel points out, this means also that as far as Dodd's treatment of them is concerned, 'the parables become biographical illustrations of the eschatological activity (Wirken) of Jesus.'² If this interpretation is correct, then again Dodd moves from biography, that is, from facts which can be established and verified by the historian qua historian, to eschatology, or to the conclusion that these historically ascertainable facts are of

¹Cf. *The Apostolic Preaching*, pp. 36ff. We may note that among these facts Dodd includes the resurrection. (*Op.cit.*, p. 45).

²Paulus und Jesus, p. 117. This book provides an excellent discussion of Dodd's interpretation of the parables. See especially pp. 110-120. Another of Jüngel's conclusions with regard to Dodd is also worth quoting when he suggests that '...er den Begriff der Eschatologie im Sinne von Zeitlosigkeit fasst...', so that, 'Die "realised eschatology" widerspricht sowohl dem Wesen der Eschatologie als auch dem Wesen der ohne Zukunft undenkbarer Gegenwart. Insofern ist sie weder "eschatology" noch "realised", sondern vielmehr eine auf dem Paradox als hermeneutischem Hilfsmittel basierende dogmatische Dialektik von Zeit und Ewigkeit.' (*Op.cit.*, p. 115, 116)

eternal and ultimate significance. In this way the 'occurrence plus meaning' definition of history is re-introduced and it is to some of the difficulties of this definition that we must now devote our attention.

It may be recalled that Dodd defined an historical event as

'...an occurrence plus the interest and meaning which the occurrence possessed for the persons involved in it, and by which the record is determined.'¹

Two preliminary criticisms of this definition have already been suggested.²

We must now take them up again in some more detail.

It has already been pointed out that such a definition of history implies, for one thing, that the true significance of any historical event can be most clearly recognised and best understood by those who actually participated in that event. This, we saw, led to the further implication, that as regards the events with which the New Testament is concerned, those who were eye-witnesses of those events must be regarded as being the only ones who may be said to have comprehended the full significance of those events.

T.A. Roberts puts the matter very clearly when he suggests that with this definition Dodd is implying that

'...what is 'historical' is the record of 'occurrences plus the meaning which these bore' to those writing the record, and that the record contains the true significance of these occurrences. In other words, true significance of past events can only be comprehended by those who were in touch with those events... Further, at any rate in the Christian case, these interpretations must be accepted as true and final since the true significance or explanation of an event can be judged only by those in direct contact with the events.'³

¹ History and the Gospel, pp. 26-27.

² Cf. pp. 89-90 above.

³ History and Christian Apologetic, p. 88.

This then is what seems to be Dodd's position. If it is, then it becomes an extremely difficult one to maintain. It has been remarked often enough that the reports of eye-witnesses, or the accounts given by those who have participated in any given sequence of historical events, far from being trust-worthy, frequently turn out to be distressingly unreliable. For example, it is most unlikely that those who may have been present when Luther attached his Ninety Five Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, or those who might have been able to testify to his dissatisfaction with the monastery and his eventual break with it, could have been in a position to grasp the full import of these events. Nor could they possibly have been fully aware of what the consequences of these actions were likely to be. To display a set of Theses which could be viewed publicly was part of the normal procedure of Scholasticism, and it may even be the case that Luther himself regarded such an action simply as an invitation to disputation and as no more momentous than this.¹ On the other hand, as to his break with the monastery and its implications, some of his superiors no doubt felt that this was little more than the wilful action of an unruly and headstrong monk.

Thus it is almost impossible for us to imagine any contemporary of Luther saying of this action, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer does, that it was

'...the fiercest attack and assault to be launched against the world since primitive christianity,'²

¹ Shortly afterwards Luther himself was to remark: 'It is a mystery to me how my theses, more so than my other writings, indeed, those of other professors, were spread to so many places...Had I anticipated their widespread popularity, I would certainly have done my share to make them more understandable.' (30th May, 1518). See: The Reformation in its own Words, ed., H.J. Hillerbrand, p. 54.

² D. Bonhoeffer, Ethics, p. 223.

or that by these actions and others, Luther had begun to lay the foundation and determine the spirit of a new historical era.¹

These examples may serve to illustrate one of the principal difficulties which Dodd's definition of history involves, for it can hardly be the case that those who are closest to events are for that reason in the best position to judge them. This is a problem which Dodd has clearly overlooked. And these latter judgements cited above are of the kind which can emerge only long after the event, and only after careful consideration and reflection upon those aspects of any historical event which were hidden from those who actually participated in it, and who, unlike the later historian, were not in a position to grasp the event as a whole.²

¹Cf. e.g., Gerhard Ritter's summing up of Luther's historical importance in his Luther. His Life and Work, especially ch.9.

²The following example, quoted by Harrison E. Salisbury in The Times, Oct.3., 1967, p.11, may also help to illustrate this. It is concerned with Stalin's purges of the Thirties. Salisbury writes: 'The tragedy was deepened by the confidence of many victims that Stalin had no part in it; that if Stalin only knew what was happening he would halt it...Mrs. Serebryakova was such a believer. She spent twenty years in the terrible 'isolators', or solitary-detention prisons...She had been twice married before her arrest, first to Grigory Y. Sokolnikov, First Soviet Ambassador to London, then later to Leonid P. Serebryakova. Both were tried in 1937 and perished. She believed for years her husbands were guilty. It was only after years in prison that the truth gradually began to dawn, that none of the thousands of victims were guilty of anything.'

Given the peculiarities of the Soviet system such a case is understandable. Since Khrushchev's speech to the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party in 1956, most historians have gathered this much regarding the events in question. But as far as these events in their entirety are concerned, neither Mrs. Serebryakova, nor any historian, is yet in a position to make any final judgement.

But Dodd's definition also includes another difficulty which is very closely related to this one. Dodd holds the Gospels to be documents descriptive of the events of the life of Jesus. At the same time they also provide the meaning or significance of these events. The meaning which the Gospels provide, it is implied, is the final one. If this is the case, then it could mean that as far as the New Testament is concerned, event and meaning are complete, or conclusively sealed off in such a way that they belong wholly to the past. But again, from the perspective of most historians, this is a view which is also almost impossible to support, for if such an implication were to be accepted as a general principle of historical method then the historian would be automatically relieved of the difficult task of continually having to revise his estimates in the light of any fresh evidence which might become available to him. It is therefore in this respect that Dodd's definition of history does not allow for the possibility that the meaning or significance of any historical event is never closed, or that events themselves may be said to have a future.¹

Finally, still with reference to Dodd's approach to the problem of history, we come to another aspect of his argument, namely, that the triumph and progress of the early Church, which shared in the fulfilment of history to which the New Testament refers, prove that its beliefs were sound.² This argument really plays a rather minor role within the wider

¹ This corresponds to the point which Bultmann makes when he writes: '...zu jedem geschichtlichen Phänomen gehört seine eigene Zukunft, in der es sich als das zeigt, was es ist; genauer: in der es sich immer mehr als das zeigt, was es ist.' Glauben und Verstehen, Vol. III, p. 113.

² See p. 88 above.

framework of Dodd's views, nevertheless it is one which has occupied a venerable place in the long history of Christian Apologetic and a view which still seems to hold its own, though nowadays perhaps only in the more popular approaches to that subject. But it might simply be pointed out by way of criticism, that although there is certainly abundant evidence to show that the early Church did triumph and make progress in history, and although such evidence would have to be taken into account in any assessment of the soundness of its beliefs, this evidence of itself is not sufficient to show that its beliefs were true. As T.A. Roberts again points out:

'As it is conceivable that Communist doctrines may conquer the world, when it is agreed that these doctrines are philosophically vulnerable if not positively false, so also there is no logical connection between the truth of the beliefs and the success of the early Church.'¹

On the other hand, and to put the problem in a slightly different way, with this argument Dodd also wishes to point out that the eschatological fulfilment in which the Church participates is to be understood as the climax of a particular series of events in which there resides a unique intensity,² or as the climax of the process of an historical development which can be traced through the Old Testament to Jesus and subsequently to the Church itself, and that the accomplishments of the Church in history amount to a proof that this fulfilment was in fact eschatological. If this is in fact what Dodd is suggesting then we may ask, as Bultmann does, whether such eschatological fulfilment is properly understood when it can be explained in this way, namely, as the climax of a process of historical

¹ History and Christian Apologetic, p. 113.

² History and the Gospel, pp. 29-30.

development and therefore as being itself a purely historical phenomenon.¹ Bultmann wants to point out that Dodd is really speaking of history and eschatology in the same key, or undialectically.

If this is a proper estimate of Dodd's position then it implies that whether or not the Church shared in the eschatological fulfilment, or rather whether or not its belief that it shared in the eschatological fulfilment was a sound belief, is something which could be proved or disproved by the historian as such on the basis of his findings concerning the Church's triumph and progress in history. This raises the very wide range of problems which centre around the difficult question whether the Church's belief, or faith, is invulnerable to the researches of the historian, or whether it must accept the risks which historical research involves. Unfortunately however, this is a problem which Dodd does not discuss.

These then are some of the difficulties involved in Dodd's understanding of history. We may now go on to examine what follows when he applies the 'occurrence plus meaning' definition of history to the New Testament, now with more specific reference to the role which this definition plays in Dodd's interpretation of New Testament eschatology as a 'realised eschatology'.

As we have seen, for Dodd, eschatology expresses the timelessness of the absolute order, or is 'the form under which the absolute value of the Gospel facts is asserted'.² These 'Gospel facts' consist of certain

¹ See Bultmann's essay, 'The Bible Today' und die Eschatologie, in The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, Essays in Honour of C.H. Dodd, Edited by W.D. Davies and D. Daube, pp. 402-408, especially p. 404.

² See p. 96 above, Note 3.

'facts of the ministry of Jesus' which are open to historical investigation and verification. This means, consequently, that it is in terms of these facts that eschatology is 'realised'.

If this is the case then it again raises the problems which have already been discussed in connection with Dodd's definition of history. But there is still at least one further difficulty. Quite apart from the fact that the above interpretation is suggested without reference to the method and findings of Form Criticism, which for one thing refuses to allow the same kind of certainty about the 'Gospel facts' which Dodd assumes, it also amounts to the position that having once ascertained and established the historical facts, eschatology may then be exhaustively interpreted in terms of these facts, that is to say, in terms of all that took place at that particular time in past history. Such an interpretation of eschatology seems therefore to convey the impression that the totality of God's action has been wholly evaporated in the intensity of one past event or in a series of past events which can be historically objectified. No doubt there is a sense in which Dodd, by treating the interdependence of history and eschatology in this way, is seeking to preserve and perhaps at the same time to locate some historically factual guarantee for the 'once-for-all' nature of the Christ-event. However, it is precisely this attempt to discover a one-sided, historically objectifiable guarantee which eschatology actually resists. In other words, the history to which the New Testament witnesses, which gives rise to faith and for that reason is eschatological, is not so because it may be substantiated from outside. It is rather a history which proves its own validity by taking place again, and which therefore has reference not only to a then but also to a now. Therefore, the full significance of these events cannot be said to be ultimate or

eschatological only on the grounds that certain witnesses judged them to be so, nor on the grounds that a historian could prove this to have been the case. They are eschatological events rather because they have the power to prove themselves as such again.¹

This is summed up very well by Friedrich Gogarten when he suggests that the historical reality of the events with which the New Testament is concerned is not to be found in

'...the "objective" and historically ascertainable fact of their having taken place, but in the kerygma, the proclamation and witness that in the events of this history God turns with grace towards mankind and their world. If one separates the history of Jesus Christ from this proclamation in which alone it is transmitted to us, then...one is losing precisely the history upon which everything depends because without it there can be no genuine, that is to say, justifying faith.'²

We may now deal finally with another implication of Dodd's definition of history and its significance for realised eschatology which is closely related to this problem. For Dodd, as has been pointed out, eschatology refers to the timeless or to the absolute. If we can

¹ Dodd in fact goes on to say something very similar to this, but in order to do so he has to turn to the concept of a Heilsgeschichte and to the realm of sacramental experience. (Cf. The Apostolic Preaching, Appendix, pp. 79ff). It would be of interest to examine just exactly how Dodd combines these with the idea of realised eschatology, but this is a problem which cannot be dealt with here.

² F. Gogarten, Mythologising and History, pp. 37-38.

It might be argued that again Dodd is saying much the same thing. But there is a difference in that in his treatment of the kerygma, Dodd re-introduces the 'event plus meaning' distinction to which we have already referred. The reason why his understanding of the kerygma has not been specifically dealt with here is because the same presuppositions run through his interpretation of the parables and their place in the proclamation of Jesus.

exemplify the way in which he relates this conception of eschatology to the history which the New Testament reports, we shall be in a better position to come to some more definite conclusion about the role which history actually plays in his exposition.

For our purposes the best example which we can select is Dodd's treatment of the symbolic, apocalyptic Son of Man figure. This figure, he states, together with the idea of the kingdom of God are ultimates, they are

'...proper not to this empirical realm of time and space, but to the absolute order.'

Jesus nevertheless declares

'...that this ultimate, the kingdom of God, has come into history, and he takes upon himself the "eschatological" role of the "son of Man".'

And it is in this sense that

'The absolute, the "wholly other", has entered time and space.'¹

This means that the timeless or the absolute, to which eschatology gives expression, is directly related to a corresponding reality in history. In this particular case it is Jesus who is said to embody the absolute or the eternal in history with his acceptance of the eschatological role of the son of Man. This would mean of course that any reference to a future coming of the son of Man would disturb this thesis. However, Dodd is able to circumvent this specific problem by dealing with any reference to a future coming of the son of Man as

'...only an accommodation of language...for there is no before or after in the eternal order.'²

¹ These quotations are all taken from The Parables of the Kingdom, p.107

² Op.cit., p. 108.

Having adopted this position he now has to conclude that it is precisely this timeless element, or better, non-historical element, which is the essence of eschatology.

Certainly it is not expressed in exactly these terms. Nevertheless, the question with which we are concerned, namely, the question of the actual role which is left for history to play, is intimately related to this interpretation of eschatology. And when Dodd goes on to say that in Jesus and in the coming of the kingdom of God

'...history has become the vehicle of the eternal',¹

its role becomes apparent, for this could actually be interpreted to mean that the true function of history is to be the bearer of the unhistorical.

This is not to say that when all is said and done, and even in spite of his emphasis on the historical nature of Christianity, Dodd really ends up by taking a Docetic view of history. Nevertheless, in the course of his treatment of the problem of the relation between history and eschatology, and taking into account all the difficulties which surround a theology of history, (or a historical christology), one of which is the very great difficulty of fencing off one's position against Docetic intrusions, it does in fact seem to be the case that he has been unable to avoid moving in this direction. But this is a path which a good many theologians have taken and still take with the very best of intentions.

This is a criticism which must of course be qualified, for if this is Docetism then at the same time it has to be made clear that such Docetism is certainly not of the classical type, nor of the kind which is strictly confined to theology and theologians. It is rather the kind of

¹Op.cit., p. 197. In this connection we may also recall Dodd's approval of Plato's idea of time as the moving image of eternity.

Docetism which tends to become apparent in any theory or philosophy of history, or in any historical explanation which reaches its conclusions with the help of something other than its own subject-matter, namely, history itself, and which for this reason is liable suddenly to find itself bereft of history entirely. This may be said of any view which has a tendency to minimise the importance of history by attempting to resolve its problems and ambiguities with a perhaps somewhat premature appeal to the eschatological, which in Dodd's case is equivalent to the timeless, or more pointedly, the non-historical. The inherent difficulty of such views is that there is a hidden inevitability about the way in which they very often tend to reduce history to the level of an illusion, one which becomes transparent only when it is perceived that real events are actually taking place elsewhere, or only when it is discovered that the meaning or significance of events is comprehended only in a timeless beyond where apparently nothing actually happens at all.

If eschatology is to be properly understood, its relation to history cannot be hastily severed in the way Dodd proposes. Nor can the problem of history be settled by surrendering it prematurely with an appeal to the eternal or unhistorical. And if it is to remain possible for Christian faith to confess that Jesus is 'true man', which is the same as saying that He is the Last Man, (no Eschatos), then it cannot be content with an impoverished version of history, but must point to history in its fullest and most genuine sense.

This problem is certainly a very difficult one. Dodd's attempt to solve it is one which in some ways is very original and one which must command respect. And even if one should conclude that he has really only raised some of the problems which emerged through the work of Schweitzer

and the Consistent School in a much more acute form, this in itself is an estimable accomplishment.

We are now in a position to summarise these main criticisms of Dodd's view. While the problem of the correlation of history and interpretation or kerygma does not appear to be an acute one for Dodd himself, it may be suggested on the basis of the criticisms already made that certain indications toward a solution to this problem do arise within the context of his definition of history as 'occurrence plus meaning'. Difficulties also emerge and most of them stem from his application of this definition of history to the biblical records.

For Dodd, unlike the proponents of Consistent Eschatology against whom he is reacting, certain 'facts of the ministry of Jesus' are essential to the kerygmatic 'meaning' of his life and ministry which was offered by the earliest community. However, if our interpretation of the implications which arise when this general definition of history is applied is valid, then as we have already suggested, between 'occurrence' and 'meaning' there is to be detected a fairly sharp dichotomy. This has emerged from our examination of Dodd's treatment of the parables of Jesus, and as we have also noted, in his discussion of the kerygma.

Some of the consequences of this have already been outlined and discussed. From a slightly different angle however, another possible criticism emerges, again from the distinctly twofold movement implied in Dodd's understanding of history as 'occurrence plus meaning'.

The impression gained from the way in which the definition is applied is that there are two distinctly separate moments in this situation. What is first of all required is the possession of certain facts. These

facts are historically ascertainable. Only subsequently is there the movement toward interpretation, in this case, the interpretation of obedient faith which puts an eschatological interpretation upon them. This could lead us to conclude that faith, rather than being a freely elicited response, becomes a kind of principle which only later gives an eschatological evaluation of the facts thus making it appear that a correlation is actually being superimposed upon them. If this is the case, then it might appear that faith has assumed some of the characteristics of a 'work'.

Our second criticism is again one which derives from his definition of history as 'occurrence plus meaning'. In this connection the problem concerns 'meaning', which, with regard to the 'Gospel facts' Dodd variously understands as 'timeless', 'absolute' or 'wholly other', or, as we have more pointedly suggested, 'non-historical'. The first two terms are derived from the Idealist tradition while 'wholly other' originates with Rudolf Otto. Dodd's use of them is somewhat indiscriminate, nor does he apply them with any particular precision. However, here again the dichotomy between historical 'occurrence' and eschatological (i.e., 'timeless' etc.) 'meaning' reasserts itself in such a way as to suggest that from Dodd's point of view there is in fact being posited a much more violent dis-correlation or dis-continuity between history and kerygma than we had at first supposed. We have referred to this in more detail above. While it amounts to a possible criticism of Dodd with regard to the problem of correlation we can nevertheless be fairly sure that this does not seem to have been Dodd's intention, nor is it the kind of situation with which Dodd himself would have been satisfied.

Presumably therefore, he would be much happier with a more empirical

solution, with a renewed appeal to the 'facts of the ministry of Jesus' and to the 'particular series of events in which a unique intensity resides'. This move however, would again raise the problem of Dodd's understanding of eschatological fulfilment which Bultmann encountered in his appraisal of Dodd's The Bible Today.¹ Bultmann suggested that Dodd understands eschatological fulfilment in this particular context undialectically, or as itself a purely historical phenomenon. If this is the case, 'occurrence' and 'meaning' then tend to coalesce in the former. If then one of the correlatives has disappeared, there is consequently no problem of correlation to be solved.

With regard therefore to the problem of correlation there are these two ways in which Dodd may be read and as we have seen these two ways are very difficult, if not in fact impossible, to reconcile.

Finally, with reference to the problem of the presence of the past, a possible understanding of which has been outlined in Chapter Two above, and which is essential for the kind of correlation which we are attempting to defend, Dodd's view, despite its problems, does endeavour to do full justice to the happened-ness of the Christ-event in terms of realised eschatology. On the other hand, what it does not quite manage to achieve, is to present its significance for the present itself and to describe the mode of the presence of this event in its qualitative limitlessness and comprehensiveness in and for the 'Now'; in other words, its existential realisation. For Dodd, of course, it may be the case that no serious difficulty need arise in this connection. With the help of Plato he is able to assume that participation in the 'occurrences and meanings' of Jesus' life and ministry is as open to us as it was to the

¹Cf. pp. 107-108 above.

original witnesses. By means of imitatio, we may also participate in those eternal truths which found their historical actualisation in Jesus.

It is unnecessary to present a detailed examination of all the difficulties involved in this admittedly attractive position. There is, however, one problem which is worth noting once again. Such a position does seem to require, for one thing, that we look to the past with our backs to the future. It might even involve the denial of our present as well, although it would be rather unfair to label Dodd's understanding of participation or imitatio as an exercise in uncritical and self-abnegating identification. Nevertheless, to the extent that his exposition does concern itself more with a 'there and then' than with a 'here and now' there is a sense in which it is inevitable that his position should at least bear some resemblance to this.

As we have already mentioned in Chapter Two above¹, it is possible for the 'inside' of any event of the past to assume the characteristics of an 'outside'. Or, in terms of Dodd's definition of history as 'occurrence plus meaning' it is possible that 'meanings' may appear foreign and external to later generations. If these meanings may be said to be invested with a particular kind of authority, (and Dodd reinforces this with the view that only those who actually participated in the events in question were able to comprehend their full significance), then from the standpoint of a later age it is natural enough to assume that it is only by means of the kind of identification we have attempted to describe that the meaning or significance of those events may be appropriated.

This is not to suggest that the meaning which the New Testament

¹Chapter Two, pp. 23-24.

gives to the events with which it is concerned is mistaken. However, the forms in which that meaning was expressed can no longer be directly appropriated in our attempt to understand ourselves and our world and to this extent they have become external. They will also remain external as long as it is considered sufficient to locate them within, and explain them in terms of their first century milieu.

Dodd is not unaware of this difficulty. He has attempted to overcome it with an appeal to Plato's doctrine of eternal truths. But this has raised another problem of which he does not seem to be aware, for in doing so, (as we have also noted above)¹, the equally strong emphasis which he had placed upon that aspect of history which he would term 'occurrence' immediately suffers a radical shift, and may possibly even have been displaced in favour of 'absolute value' in the process.

There is still one further point with reference to Dodd's views which may be briefly mentioned and which at the same time will also point to the subject of our next chapter. Dodd writes:

'There remains a residue of eschatology which is not exhausted in the 'Realised Eschatology' of the Gospel, namely, the element of sheer finality...Thus the idea of a second coming of Christ appears along with the assertion that his coming in history satisfies all the conditions of the eschatological event, except that of absolute finality.'²

It is not exactly clear how this notion, which amounts to little more than an afterthought or to one of Karl Barth's 'innocent appendices', is compatible with a realised eschatology. Nor does Dodd himself state whether, for example, this is meant in some sense to refer to the 'not yet' of an event which is still to come in the future, nor, if this is the case,

¹See pp. 111-114 above.

²The Apostolic Preaching, p. 93.

in what way the apparent inconsistency of this idea with a realised eschatology is to be overcome. Whatever the case may be, this is a notion which Dodd requires in order to develop his own understanding of 'salvation history' or Heilsgeschichte.¹

In our discussion of the relationship between history and eschatology, we have now reached the stage where we may devote our attention to this theme, especially as it affects the subject of this study. However, rather than examining the idea of salvation history as it is presented in outline by Dodd, we now turn to Oscar Cullmann, the best-known exponent of salvation history among New Testament critics.

¹See Note 1, p. 110 above.

CHAPTER FIVE : HISTORY AND THE ESCHATOLOGY
OF SALVATION HISTORY

Oscar Cullmann

CHAPTER FIVE

HISTORY AND THE ESCHATOLOGY OF SALVATION HISTORY

The Eschatology of Heilsgeschichte

At the present time the most widely-known and probably most persuasive exponent of a theology of salvation history is Oscar Cullmann. In this chapter we shall be concerned with those aspects of his understanding of Heilsgeschichte which are most relevant to the particular theme of this study.

Before going on to present an outline of Cullmann's position, it is necessary first of all to say something about the history of the term Heilsgeschichte and some of the terms which are most closely related to it. This will enable us at the same time to give some indication of the nature of the particular theological tradition which much of Cullmann's work presupposes, and, though with certain qualifications, of which he is the modern representative.

I

Terms such as Heilsgeschichte and the very similar Heilskonomie, first became current in Swabian pietistic circles towards the middle of the eighteenth century¹. The most influential member of one of these circles was Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752), author of the celebrated

¹See Article on Heilsgeschichte by Otto A. Piper in A Handbook of Christian Theology, pp. 160-163.

Gaemon Novi Testamenti. Sharing to a certain extent the apocalyptic and millennial presuppositions of the circle to which he belonged, though by no means a Schwärmer, Bengel put forward the view that the pattern of historical events recorded in the Bible not only conformed to a certain chronological order but corresponded to a teleological principle. They were to be understood as successive stages in the divine plan of salvation or as the step by step actualisations of the divine economy or Heilsgeschichte.¹

In the nineteenth century at least two different views of salvation history began to emerge. There was the one suggested by C.I. Scofield (1843-1921), a view which might more aptly be described as Dispensationalism, with its division of history into seven periods or dispensations, each characterised and differentiated by special revelations of the will of God.²

However, as far as the development of Biblical Criticism was concerned, it was the second view which proved to be the more significant and influential. The man who may be said to have provided the clearest formulation of this position was J.F. Reek (1804-1878).³ Having adopted some of Bengel's presuppositions, Reek pointed out that the events recorded in the Bible in fact demonstrated a pattern of progressive revelation in history, and indicated the step by step disclosure of the divine economy or plan of salvation. He also held the view that the Kingdom of God, as

¹On Bengel's 'prophetic' reckoning, the millenium was to begin on 18.6.1836. (Cf. H. Mezger's Article on Bengel in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Third Ed., Vol.I, cols 1037-1038.

²Cf. the Scofield Bible with its dating of events and dispensations, following the system of dating originally attributed to Bishop James Ussher, 1581-1656.

³Cf. Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Third Ed., Vol.I, cols 953-954. (Hereinafter referred to as R.G.G.)

a supernatural reality within history, was growing progressively towards maturity and would finally be consummated in an eschatological christocracy.

The further development of this second view found its clearest expression in the work of Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann (1810-1877)¹, the most influential representative of what came to be known as the Erlangen School.²

According to von Hofmann, all biblical history is to be understood as prophetic history and therefore as salvation history. Prophecy itself, on von Hofmann's view, is not simply a matter of prophetic statements or oracles. Rather, history itself is prophecy in the sense that (with particular reference to the biblical record) each historical stage in the history of Israel is simultaneously the fulfilment of a previous stage and the prophecy of a future stage. And by broadening this conception of history to embrace world history as well, von Hofmann goes on to suggest that Christ and His Church is the telos not only of the history of Israel, but also of the whole of history. He writes:

'If it is true that all things, great and small, serve to bring about the unification of the world under its head, Christ, then there is absolutely nothing in the history of the world in which something divine does not dwell, and so nothing which must necessarily remain foreign to prophecy.'³

Jürgen Moltmann sums up this view and those similar to it as follows:

¹Cf. R.G.G., Third Ed., Vol.III, cols 419-422.

²Cf. R.G.G., Third Ed., Vol.II, cols 566-568. The main influences on this school were Schelling, Hegel and Schleiermacher.

³Quoted by R. Bultmann in the essay, Weissagung und Erfüllung, in Glauben und Verstehen, Vol.II, p. 169. Eng. trans. in Essays on Old Testament Interpretation, Ed. C. Westermann, p. 56.

'This theology of a progressive revelation of God in the history of salvation - conceived as esoteric knowledge on the part of those in initiated circles - is 'economic' to the extent that it brings to light the 'economies', or saving dispensations, of God in the past and thus turns past history into comprehended history, while on the other hand it draws conclusions for God's future action from his ways in the past. It is 'prophetic' in the ultimate sense, since it seeks to take prophecies and events in the past which point beyond the present, and use them as a means of discovering and portraying the future.'¹

Thus despite the differences of these views, they all tend to present these common features. Biblical history is read as a key to history as a whole and the Bible itself is treated as God's own commentary on those events in world history of which He Himself is the initiator.

However, perhaps the most remarkable thing about all of these views was that they were not only confined to the pietistic circles in which they were developed, but lent themselves most readily to philosophical or secular reformulation. It is Hegel's philosophy of history which provides the most obvious example of this, and in fact on a closer examination of von Hofmann's statement above, it becomes quite apparent that the distance which separates him from Hegel is so small as to be almost imperceptible. The idea that a providential pattern, or a progressive revelation can be found in history, or that, as von Hofmann says, 'there is absolutely nothing in the history of the world in which something divine does not dwell', runs closely parallel to Hegel's philosophy of history, a philosophy which involves the application of these principles in a secularised form, and especially to Hegel's view that in everything that happens there is to be discerned the self-actualisation of the absolute spirit.²

¹ J. Holtmann, Theology of Hope, p. 71.

² For a discussion of Hegel's philosophy of history in relation to ideas of progress and development see John Maillie's The Belief in Progress especially pp. 118-138.

II

It is to this theological tradition that Cullmann belongs, and to a closer examination of his work we must now turn. As the most modern representative of the theology of Heilsgeschichte Cullmann acknowledges his debt mainly to von Hofmann, and states that it is the position of the Erlangen School which corresponds most closely to the view which he is seeking to develop.¹ Nevertheless, there are certain differences. For one thing, Cullmann points out that his interpretation of Heilsgeschichte attempts to avoid every connection with nineteenth century philosophy. Whether he is actually able to achieve this is of course another question. However, the most important point of difference between Cullmann and von Hofmann and the Erlangen School, is that Cullmann's point of departure is not primarily the biblical understanding of history and its relation to prophecy or of prophetic history, but the biblical understanding of time as linear.²

It is impossible to do full justice to Cullmann's entire scheme. However, we may first of all present in outline those aspects of it which are most closely related to the problem of the interdependence of history and eschatology.

According to Cullmann, God reveals Himself upon the straight line of temporal events,³ and it is also in terms of this time-line that the continuity of salvation history is preserved. Salvation history itself

¹Christ and Time, p. 27, note 10. (German edition, Christus und die Zeit, Zürich, 1946.)

²Op.cit., Part I, pp. 37-118.

³In Christ and Time Cullmann's view is that time is to be understood as a straight ascending line. In his later book, Heil als Geschichte, 1965, (English translation Salvation in History, 1967), he modifies this position and suggests that the time-line or the redemptive line should be understood as a Wellenlinie, a wave-shaped or fluctuating line. This is to illustrate the fact that the execution of God's plan in history suffers certain setbacks, or presumably, that the development of the Heilsgeschichte involves to some extent a struggle with Unheilsgeschichte. See Heil als Geschichte, Foreword IX and p. 103, 106f., 242 and 266.

is a process primarily characterised by the progressive development of revelation which continues to spread and extend itself to encompass world history, and which ultimately comes to an end in the universalism of the new creation. Gullmann points out however, that the decisive event of salvation has already taken place in Christ at the mid-point of the time-line. Furthermore, in this event there is in principle contained the entire salvation history.¹ However, the eschaton or ta eschata, which Gullmann interprets in the strictly temporal sense as 'the end-time' or 'the last time', is still to come.² This temporal definition of eschatology corresponds to his understanding of time as linear and is thus integrally related to the notion of salvation history and its development.

A second important element in Gullmann's view is that salvation history works on the principle of election and selective representation. Gullmann writes:

'That the continuous redemptive line is not a merely formal framework of which the Primitive Christian preaching can be stripped, is shown...in the fact that the movement of this development in time is determined by a notably theological principle, namely, that of election and representation.'³

A minority is called or elected for the purpose of the redemption of all, the minority therefore having a representative function.⁴

It is this factor which is the outstanding characteristic of the historical centre of salvation history. At the mid-point of the redemptive

¹Cf. e.g. Heil als Geschichte, p. 68, 82.

²Op.cit., pp. 60-61.

³Christ and Time, p. 115.

⁴Op.cit., p. 115.

is the Christ-event. From creation to this mid-point there can be traced a progressive process of reduction. The many, the people of Israel, in due course consist of a remnant. The remnant is then in turn reduced to the One who takes the role of Israel upon Himself. This idea is already adumbrated in Deutero-Isaiah in terms of the figure of the suffering Servant, and in Daniel in the figure of the son of Man.¹ With regard to these figures and their relation to the vocation of Jesus, Cullmann writes:

'This One enters into history in Jesus of Nazareth, who executes both the mission of the Suffering Servant of God and that of the Danielic son of Man; by his vicarious death he first completes that for which God had chosen the people of Israel...Here the redemptive history has reached its centre.'²

However, from this point onwards there is now a marked change. Cullmann continues:

'The principle is still that of election and representation; but no longer in the sense of a reduction. Rather, all further development unfolds so that from the centre reached in the resurrection of Christ the way no longer leads from the many to the One, but on the contrary, from the One, in progressive advance, to the many. This advance so occurs however, that this many has to represent the One.'³

The passages which follow are also worth quoting:

'The way therefore now proceeds from Christ to those who believe on Him, who know that they are redeemed by their faith in his vicarious death. It leads to the apostles, to the Church, which is the body of the One and now has to fulfil for mankind the task of the 'remnant', the 'people of the saints'. Thus the development advances from this point to the redeemed humanity in the Kingdom of God and to the redeemed creation of the new heaven and the new earth ...Thus the entire redemptive history unfolds as two movements: the one proceeds from the many to the One; this is the Old Covenant.

¹ Daniel, 7:13f.

² Christ and Time, p. 116.

³ Op.cit., p. 117. See also Heil als Geschichte, p. 82f.

The other proceeds from the One to the many; this is the New Covenant. At the very mid-point stands the expiatory deed of the death and resurrection of Christ.¹

This entire scheme, first outlined in Christ and Time² and now taken up again and further elaborated in Heil als Geschichte, is to be understood as the historical (historisch) central portion of salvation history. The history of Israel, the remnant, the life of Jesus, the church and its mission, are the historically controllable (historisch kontrollierbar) elements within the scheme of salvation history, and these elements are in principle open to historical research.³

In Heil als Geschichte, this divine plan is called the constant. Here, Gullmann reminds us that salvation history is composed of elements of constancy and contingency.⁴ That is to say, when a new kairos⁵ occurs, a new perspective upon the divine plan is imposed. This new perspective is one from which earlier interpretations of the previous kairos of salvation history may be re-interpreted and even corrected.

¹ Christ and Time, p. 117, and Heil als Geschichte, p. 136.

² For criticisms of Christ and Time see e.g., R. Bultmann's essay, Heilsgeschichte und Geschichte, in Th.Lz., LXXIII, (1948), 659-666, translated in Existence and Faith, Ed. S. Ogden, pp. 226-240.

E. Fuchs' essay, Christus das Ende der Geschichte, first published in Ev.Theol., 1948-49, 447-461. Now in Gen.Aufs.II, pp. 79-99. 1960.

J. Marsh, The Fulness of Time, p. 174ff.

J. Barr, Biblical Words for Time, pp. 47-81 and pp. 136-140.

For a more favourable criticism see Karl Löwith's, Meaning in History, especially pp. 182ff.

³ Heil als Geschichte, Part III, ch.1, pp. 117-131.

⁴ ET, pp. 122ff.

⁵ A term which is conspicuously absent from Gullmann's later book.

The constant element is the divine plan of election and representation. Relative to this constant are the new perspectives which are occasioned by new events and which thus evoke new interpretations.

With reference to the New Testament, the principal clue to the understanding of the constant, an understanding which all the writers have in common, is that they view it as already (schon) having taken place. Contingent upon this already is the not yet (noch nicht). The already of the election and representation of the One is in this way related to the contingent not yet which permits continual re-adjustment, the not yet in the case of the New Testament being the length of the time of the interval between the resurrection and the Parousia.¹

Relevant also to Gullmann's discussion of constancy and contingency and to his understanding of event and interpretation is his view of the relationship between history and myth. The historical mid-section, according to Gullmann, also contains elements of myth. The myths of the beginning and the end can be separated from the historical central portion, but this historical portion itself is also inter-woven with historically uncontrollable (i.e. mythical) elements. These mythical elements are not to be interpreted existentially as Bultmann suggests, because the Bible

'has already demythologised the myths by placing them on one and the same level with the historically controllable middle portion of biblical history, thereby historicising them.'²

In this sense the Bible may be said to do its own demythologising. For example, the creation myth is historicised by being linked with the

¹Gullmann's understanding of constancy and contingency is central to his whole argument. We shall return to it below in our examination of his view of event and interpretation.

²Heil als Geschichte, p. 120. Here we can already detect the way in which Gullmann frequently first makes a distinction, as here between history and myth, which is then promptly set aside with the statement in this case that they are in any case 'on one and the same level'. The argument could run as follows: Heilsgeschichte is composed of both history and myth and we must distinguish between them. But myth and history are to be found on the same level in Heilsgeschichte. This in fact renders the distinction innocuous. We shall encounter this problem again in our discussion of his understanding of event and interpretation.

historically controllable middle section of salvation history where its function becomes that of demonstrating

'the solidarity of creation with mankind, and mankind's relation to a Heilsgeschichte which has been conditioned by sin.'¹

In the New Testament the myths of the end are demythologised in a similar way. The resurrection of the dead is historicised in the sense that it is intimately related to the historical Jesus of Nazareth, (I Cor.15:12ff.). Christ as the mediator of creation and of the end are therefore ideas which must be interpreted and understood in relation to the historical life of Jesus which is the centre of all events.²

Cullmann goes on to state that the whole of New Testament mythology may in fact be said to be historicised in one historical event, the death of Jesus and the events which immediately succeeded upon it. In this way then, the myths are placed at the service of salvation history, at the mid-point of which stands this historically controllable event.³

Having introduced the way in which Cullmann proposes the means for dealing with the myths of the end, we may now give some further indication of what he understands by eschatology in order to complete this somewhat lengthy outline of Cullmann's scheme, and also in accordance with the general pattern set out in the previous chapters.

As the central event of what Cullmann now calls the Wendelinie, Christ fulfils all foregoing events. In the Christ-event the future is

¹ Heil als Geschichte, p. 126.

² Op.cit., p. 128.

³ Op.cit., p. 117. On Cullmann's view the resurrection forms part of the historisch kontrollierbar element in salvation history.

also anticipated in such a way that through participation in baptism and in the eucharist the believer already has a share in the salvation which has already been effected but which at the same time awaits completion. Cullmann gives expression to this situation in the following frequently quoted analogy: the decisive battle has been fought, there can now no longer be any doubt about the ultimate outcome, nevertheless the actual day of victory is still to be awaited.¹

Since the decisive battle has been fought, eschatology can no longer be as important for Christianity as it had been for Judaism:

'The norm is no longer that which is to come; it is he who has already come. Eschatology is not put aside, but it is dethroned, and this holds true both chronologically and essentially.'²

The new Aeon has already come, the Parousia remains outstanding as part of that future which promises a new heaven and a new earth and the complete transformation of all things. The present is therefore primarily characterised by tension. On the one hand it may certainly be said that the principalities and powers are already overcome, nevertheless the battle continues. It is also this peculiar tension which constitutes part of the novum of the New Testament.

'The new element in the New Testament is not eschatology, but what I call the tension between the decisive 'already fulfilled' and the 'not yet completed', between present and future.'³

This tension is strictly chronological. It is not to be understood in terms of a time-eternity dialectic, nor in terms of a dialectic of existence,

¹ Christ and Time, p. 84f; Heil als Geschichte, p. 26.

² Christ and Time, p. 139. Rather than question the wisdom of the D-Day V-Day analogy we may turn from the world of battles to the world of sport and ask whether it is wise for supporters to shout Goal! before the ball is actually in the net.

³ Heil als Geschichte, p. 153.

both of which are quite foreign to the New Testament. It is a temporal tension between an 'already' and a 'not yet', between present and future.

This tension, then, is the principal key to New Testament salvation history. And, Cullmann adds, it is with this conception of the tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet' (cf. his remarks on constancy and contingency) that all the New Testament writers work, and having this principle in common they all therefore write from the presupposition of this heilsgeschichtliche scheme.¹ It is this which also lends the New Testament its unity.

The scope of Cullmann's work and the ground which he covers in his endeavour to interpret the Bible in terms of salvation history is quite immense and commands a certain admiration. However, this in itself makes it virtually impossible to be justly and equally critical of this entire scheme which he has now brought up to date and extended in Heil als Geschichte. Indeed to undertake such a task would be rather like attempting to navigate a small boat single-handed around the world, an enterprise which not only requires many exceptional and varied skills, but one which also requires considerable time. The cynic might possibly suggest that of the latter Cullmann himself has enough and to spare. In return, the more critical observer might nevertheless point out that the kind of time which he does have at his disposal is not the kind of time which one may give.² However that may be, it is chiefly due to the absence of some of the former of these requirements that in the following discussion Cullmann's references to the salvation-historical basis of the Old Testament

¹Heil als Geschichte, Part III, ch.3, pp. 147-165.

²For example, Ernst Fuchs in his essay, 'Christus das Ende der Geschichte' writes: 'Wenn ich sage: ich gebe dir Zeit, dann heisst das nicht: ich gebe dir Linie, sondern: ich gebe dir Frist.' (Zur Frage nach dem historischen Jesus, p. 83, note 10.

will appear only peripherally.

We shall concentrate therefore on his view of salvation history in relation to the New Testament. We shall be chiefly concerned with Parts I and II of Heil als Geschichte and more specifically with his understanding of Event and Interpretation (Ereignis und Deutung)¹. Gullmann's treatment of the relationship between history and myth, or the relationship between what he terms the historically controllable and historically uncontrollable elements in salvation history,² the problem of constancy and contingency and the implications of his distinction between New Testament salvation history and history³ are dependent upon his discussion of the Event and Interpretation complex. In order to introduce these closely allied themes our long introduction has been necessary. To present a detailed examination of each of them in turn will not be necessary if we can concentrate upon and offer some criticism of the principal theme of Event and Interpretation with which they are so closely connected and examine its relevance to the understanding of Christ as the mid-point or the normative 'central event' of salvation history.

III

Salvation History as Event and Interpretation

The notion of history as event and interpretation immediately recalls C.H. Dodd's definition of history as 'occurrence plus meaning'.

¹ Heil als Geschichte, Part II, chs. 1 and 2, pp. 70-96, (E.T., pp. 84-114).

² *Op.cit.*, Part III, ch. 1, pp. 117-131, (E.T., pp. 136-150).

³ *Op.cit.*, Part III, ch. 2, pp. 131-146, (E.T., pp. 150-166).

(For convenience we shall quote from the English translation and refer to the German edition only where it may be judged necessary.)

At first sight one might therefore be disposed to assume that Cullmann is about to embark upon a course closely similar to that taken by Dodd. However, there is obviously an immediate and very important difference between their respective approaches. Presumably Dodd would wish to affirm that his definition of history is universally valid and therefore applicable not only within the boundaries of that history with which the Bible is specifically concerned. Cullmann, on the other hand, would appear to be unwilling openly to make this concession and therefore confines and applies these categories to the biblical history alone.

He thus sets out to deal not so much with the kind of history which Collingwood defined as 'actions on the part of human beings done in the past'¹ (a definition with which Dodd may have agreed in principle), but rather with the kind of history which Collingwood called 'actions on the part of the gods'² or Heilsgeschichte, the history of 'the mighty acts'.

This does not mean of course that Cullmann is not interested in history as the actions of men done in the past. In fact it is essential to his understanding of Heilsgeschichte that they should form a constituent part of it and that they should be 'historically controllable', that is, that it should be made up of events which are 'open to historical investigation...of events belonging to secular history'.³

At this point we may note that the principal difficulty which the interpreter of Cullmann has to face is that of determining precisely

¹The Idea of History, p. 9.

²Op.cit., p. 11.

³Salvation in History, E.T. pp. 139-140.

in what sense 'secular history' is related to salvation history.

However, though this question may be raised at this stage, it is one which can be adequately dealt with only after we have examined the most vital parts of his argument in some more detail.

The first demonstration of their mutual involvement with one another, Gullmann notes, is to be derived from the biblical understanding of event and interpretation and the way in which the movement of event and interpretation governs the entire biblical record. He writes:

'Salvation history does not arise by a simple adding up of events recognised in faith as saving events. It is rather the case that corrections of the interpretation of past saving events are undertaken in the light of new events.'¹

Nor is salvation history a history which develops along-side secular history for it evolves within history.² Each new event, in the movement of event and interpretation, is linked with earlier interpretations and traditions, and the new events themselves are thus incorporated in the new interpretations. It can therefore be assumed that there is a progressive development of salvation history in the Bible for the divine plan is one which is disclosed in succeeding events as they occur and the events themselves provide new perspectives from which the constant of the divine plan may be viewed.³

As for the actual events which are the occasion of kerygmatic salvation-historical interpretation it must be stated that there is often difficulty in establishing what actually happened and equally in

¹Op.cit., (ET), p. 88. (Ger., p. 71) Words underlined denote Gullmann's emphasis unless otherwise mentioned.

²Op.cit., (ET), p. 153.

³Op.cit., (ET), pp. 124-125.

distinguishing event from interpretation. Nevertheless, Cullmann argues, salvation history is founded upon actual events and is in no sense a disembodied mythological construction. However difficult it may be to separate event from interpretation, Cullmann suggests that there must have been three distinguishable moments in the Ereignis-Deutung complex. There must be:

'...first, the naked event to which the prophet must be an eye-witness and which is perceived by non-believers as well, who are unable to see any revelation in it; second, the revelation of a divine plan being disclosed in the event to the prophet, with which he aligns himself in faith; third, the creation of an association with earlier salvation-historical revelations imparted, to other prophets in the re-interpretations of these revelations.'

For Cullmann, then, revelation essentially consists in both event and interpretation. The difficulty again, as we shall see, is to discover precisely what he means by 'both', 'and'.² Does he mean, for example, that revelation is somehow given in both simultaneously? Or, does he mean that revelation is given first in events and then subsequently and distinguishably in interpretations? Whatever his answers to these questions we must nevertheless first ask: if event and interpretation are in fact distinguishable, how is this distinction to be made, and to what purpose?

That a distinction be made between any given event and its interpretation is one of the rare concessions which Cullmann is prepared to make to "modern man". Unlike the biblical witnesses, to whom such a distinction would have been meaningless, in the interests of modern

¹Op.cit., (ET), p. 90.

²In this particular connection we may note a sentence in the German edition (p. 71), (ET, p. 89): 'Offenbarungsgeschichte und Deutungsgeschichte gehören ganz eng mit der Heilsgeschichte zusammen, aber so, dass Heilsgeschichte der Überbegriff ist.' Cullmann's explanation of the relationship between these three histories is hardly a model of clarity. He does wish to indicate however that revelation is in some sense given with events. Deutungsgeschichte is then the interpretation of these events in their relation to past salvation-historical keiroi, while Heilsgeschichte is the third element in which both are integrated.

historical research it is necessary to sift event from interpretation no matter how difficult the undertaking may be.

However difficult this task, the attempt must be made. Cullmann writes:

'In the Bible we have, of course, only kerygmatic interpretations before us, and not a simple report of facts that could influence us as the events of the present influenced them (i.e. the biblical witnesses). It would seem that we approach their understanding in faith if we at least dare to make the attempt, however uncertain its success may be, to place the events alongside the interpretation in such a way that in the naked events disclosed to us the interpretation is forced upon us as it was upon the biblical witnesses. Do we not comprehend the interpretation even better if we also allow it to come to us out of the naked events which for us, of course, lie in the past? When we become acquainted with the naked event as well, does not the reliving of the event in the present become more real for us?'¹

Judging from this passage only, it would seem that the serious difficulty of distinguishing event from interpretation is actually one which may be overcome with surprising ease and rapidity. The nackten Ereignisse are separable after all. It is unfortunate however, that Cullmann offers no concrete example of this which might provide us with a clearer demonstration of his proposed solution to this very complex problem.

Before continuing to summarise and offer further comment on Cullmann's argument, we may note the general point that these principal features of the event-interpretation understanding of salvation history are closely similar in both Old and New Testaments. In both cases, Cullmann stresses the decisive role played by eye-witnesses while noting that their role in the New Testament is more emphasised. The bearer of revelation must be an eye-witness of the revelatory event. As far as the New Testament is concerned, this must be stressed all the more as an

¹Op.cit., (ET), p. 96. We may also add here a sentence from p. 93 (ET) which again tends to make for rather more confusion than clarity: 'The traditional kerygma has events as its object. It has as its aim the leading of the person to whom it is delivered to this object, that is, to the (interpreted) events.' It would be simpler to say that the aim of the kerygma is to point those to whom it is delivered to the kerygma!

effective deterrent to those who display an unhealthy docetic disregard for event in the interest of interpretation or kerygma.¹

There is therefore an essential continuity between the testaments since there is a continuity of function between prophets and apostles as the bearers of revelation. However, Gullmann adds, this view of salvation history which is being presented can be properly understood only if we hold that both Old and New Testament writers received a 'spiritually comprehended revelation about particular events and their relationship to other events'.²

If the event-interpretation process is closely similar throughout the Bible, what is it that constitutes the essential novum of the New Testament? The fundamental difference is that in the New Testament the history of salvation is summed up in one event which is normative for the whole. Like the other events which go to make up the history of salvation, it is an event which belongs within the structures of (secular?) history, yet which

'...according to its own revealed interpretation so surpasses in importance all other interpreted events that it is the decisive point of orientation for them and assumes cosmic dimensions in its consequences.'³

In the same way as the other revealers of the divine salvation history Jesus

'...includes himself in the event happening at the place in which

¹See e.g., op.cit., (ET), pp. 90-91 and p. 157 where he writes:...'the very concept of the office of apostle is linked with the verification of historical facts'. To support this Gullmann cites I Cor.15:3ff.

²Op.cit., (ET) p. 98.

³Op.cit., (ET) pp. 100-101.

he stands. But the new revelation now consists in his proclaiming this as the decisive locus of all salvation history. He aligns himself in such a way that in his case actually one can no longer speak of alignment, since he is now manifest as the basis of the whole process, past and future.¹

Jesus' alignment with past salvation history is also indicated by the fact that he accepts the roles of son of Man and Suffering Servant. That he did so can be historically proved.²

There is one last step in Gullmann's argument. Subsequent to the resurrection the disciples or eye-witnesses of the events who at the same time are the guarantors of Jesus' own salvation historical interpretation of those events incorporate them and his interpretation of them in their own kerygma and so interpret them anew. Continuity is therefore established between the events of Jesus' life together with his own interpretation of them and the post-resurrection kerygma. The disciples had at their disposal Jesus' own heils-machendliche interpretation of himself and his activity. There can therefore be no such thing as an abrupt hiatus between the Proclaimer and the Proclaimed.³

¹Op.cit., (ET), p.117. Some comment on the notion of 'aligning oneself' in salvation history will be apposite at this point. The verb in German is sich einreihen and is employed quite frequently by Gullmann. For example, faith is the step by means of which one sich einreicht in the history of salvation. There may be detected an almost military flavour about it as for example in the command 'Fall in', a command which would also be quite appropriate in the context of salvation history as Gullmann understands it. However, when Gullmann suggests here that in the case of Jesus one can hardly speak of alignment at all it may be said that there is therefore a sense in which Jesus 'aus der Reihe fällt', (emphasis mine). Gullmann does not develop this and as it stands it is extremely difficult to distinguish the decisive role of Jesus from that of those who do 'align themselves'.

²Op.cit., (ET), p. 108, for example.

³Op.cit., (ET), p. 104.

It is difficult to present Gullmann's outline of the process and development of event and interpretation in briefer form. It is hoped however, that the above amounts to a fair and adequate summary. We have already noted some of the difficulties and confusions in the course of his argument. It is also an argument which covers so much ground that a number of different but related problems could be selected for closer examination. However, we shall select the main problem of the whole argument, namely, what exactly does Gullmann mean when he refers to revelation and its relation to the process of event and interpretation?

When we dismantle the involved framework of Gullmann's argument we discover that the view which he most certainly proposes is that revelation consists in both (emphasis mine) event and interpretation. Some of the confusions in the argument would suggest however, that if we were to ask Gullmann whether by this he understands that revelation is given in events and interpretations without separation and confusion, or first in the event and then in the interpretation separately, his answer would have to be, contrary to his intention, that on the basis of his argument both interpretations of his view are correct. In fact it is difficult to come to any other conclusion on this matter because of the way in which Gullmann, however unwillingly, is able to make a very clear distinction between event and interpretation, and then having once made it, or having at least asserted that such a distinction can be made, immediately finds himself in a position in which he is unable to do anything with it.¹

It is a distinction which we must make according to Gullmann.

¹Cf. quotation from p. 96 of ET cited on p. 136 above.

However, since this was a distinction unknown and unnecessary to the biblical writers themselves, it is one which we must make in order to reject, for having once separated the nackten Ereignisse from their kerygmatic heilsgeschichtliche interpretations the naked events themselves encounter us in such a way that their biblical salvation-historical interpretation is 'forced upon us as it was upon the biblical witnesses'.¹ Consequently, since the salvation-historical interpretation of the biblical witnesses is the true one, we are required to give up the distinction which we must make in order to think as they did.

The consequences of an argument of this kind are manifold, but one of the most serious ones would be that the distinction which the historian must make and which theologians have also learned to make between fact and legend or between history and myth² is rendered useless. And if these distinctions have to be first made and later re-integrated in a new synthesis and in that sense relinquished, this will hardly be necessary for the reason that Cullmann suggests, namely, in order that we should view these matters as did the biblical witnesses. The tempting luxury of this kind of Anhebung is one which we can no longer afford.

This is a general but very serious difficulty which confronts us at practically each step of Cullmann's argument. But we must now turn and examine it a little more closely.

¹ Cf. quotation from p. 96 of EF cited on p. 136 above.

² As we have already noted in our brief outline of Cullmann's treatment of the problem of history and myth he finds them both 'on one and the same level with the historically controllable middle portion of biblical history.' (Cf. quotation on p. 128 of this chapter). Again for the biblical witnesses this may have been the case. But if we are to accept this view then the attempt to sift myth from history becomes fruitless, and perhaps from Cullmann's point of view, even wilful.

There are at least three possibilities of interpreting Gullmann's view of the relationship between event and interpretation. The first, that revelation is given in interpretation alone, is a possibility which may be immediately excluded. Gullmann rejects it primarily because of its dangerous proximity to Docetism with its exclusion of event in favour of interpretation, a view to which, according to Gullmann, Bultmann is very partial.¹

A second possibility may be that revelation is given in event alone. This would seem to be a possible interpretation of Gullmann's position which follows from his ability to make a strict distinction between event and interpretation, and especially since he can refer to the nackten Ereignisse, which, with the help of that distinction can be laid out seriatim alongside their given interpretations in the New Testament, have the inherent power to commend that interpretation to us.

For one thing this means that the salvation-historical interpretation which these events are alleged to have in the New Testament must commend itself to us as the only possible one and the correct one.² The second problem arising from the confusion of the argument and which affects the possible interpretation that revelation is given in event alone can be derived from the way in which Gullmann handles the proposed distinction between event and interpretation itself. The difficulty of sifting events from interpretations and the question of what sort of refined procedures might be required for such an exercise are simply passed over without comment. Despite this apparent difficulty he then goes on to assert

¹Op.cit., (BT), p. 91.

²This problem has already been examined in our discussion of C.H. Dodd's view.

that it is possible to make the distinction and affirms thereby that there is no real problem here at all. This means therefore that whether events can be distinguished from interpretations is a possibility which he first affirms with certain serious qualifications, which he then goes on to re-affirm with no explanation and with spectacular ease, and which he then finally denies, for as he says

'in the Bible we have only kerygmatic interpretations before us'.¹

And since the biblical witnesses in any case made no such distinction we must also give it up.

These difficulties make it almost impossible to take Cullmann's argument any farther and leave us all the more perplexed about his insistence that the reality of revelation is somehow given in both event and interpretation. Even if we give him the benefit of all our doubts and come to the charitable conclusion that revelation as he really understands it is given in both event and interpretation simultaneously and that there is therefore a reciprocal confirmation between event and interpretation, the argument behind this which he might presumably employ to support such a suggestion would make it all the more difficult to accept. For if it could be concluded that the view which he is in fact proposing is that interpretation confirms event and vice versa, this, he would assert, is a process from which I am excluded, not only because of my possible inability to view these matters as did the biblical witnesses, or because of my inevitable uncertainty concerning knowledge about how in fact they did view them, but because event and interpretation are matters which in effect are closed. It has all happened outside and apart from

¹Op.cit., (BT), p. 96.

me. What I am required to do is 'align myself' or, more bluntly, 'fall in' (nich einreihen).

In reacting to the possible refusal to do so Cullmann wrote in Christ and Time

'He who refuses to be satisfied with the historical proof that the redemptive history is the heart of the primitive christian New Testament preaching, and is determined to go on and take his own chosen attitude to it, should know that he thereby makes his personal decision for or against the christian message itself.'¹

The tone of Salvation in History is admittedly somewhat more mellow, but the same rather over-zealous insistence is still to be detected. And again, despite Cullmann's determination to avert the frequent criticism that salvation history is really an artificial construction alongside and neatly separable from history and with which one must 'align oneself', there is at least one sentence in Salvation in History which may be quoted to indicate that he finds this kind of separate packaging of histories quite appropriate for his purposes after all. He writes:

'On account of our birth we belong to many 'histories', as to the history of our family or the history of our nation. On account of our decision of faith we align ourselves (raihen wir uns ein) in this very special history, the history of salvation.'²

Seen in the context of the whole sweep of Cullmann's argument, these remarks and many others like them might justifiably lead us to suppose that the New Testament is really an ideological manifesto and faith a variety of salvation-historical gnosis.

¹ Christ and Time, p. 29.

² Salvation in History, p. 21. (German edition, p. 3.)

These are only a few of the difficulties in Cullmann's presentation of his understanding of event and interpretation. It is largely because of the confusions we have already noted that it has been difficult to trace any really consistent argument at all and so present it as such for more detailed scrutiny and criticism.

In connection with the much wider implications of Cullmann's whole view further important problems could be raised. For one thing there is the question of the role of eye-witnesses. It might be suggested that this particular problem is more complex than Cullmann is disposed to assume and that he leaves himself open to the same criticisms to which the position of C.H. Dodd is exposed. There are also the wider problems such as whether one can in fact confidently assume that all the New Testament writers work from the same salvation-historical point of view and whether, if this is or is not the case, to what extent Cullmann's Heilsgeschichte is a valid distillation of their basic intention or an unjustified harmonisation of or imposition upon the New Testament.¹ However, we must leave these wider problems aside and following the pattern of previous chapters turn briefly to the problem of eschatology and its connection with history.

IV

Strictly speaking, eschatology refers to the 'final time' according to Cullmann.² However, in the New Testament there is a tension between this final time and the time already fulfilled, between a schen and a

¹ Some of these questions are taken up in the criticisms of Christ and Time (cf. p.127, note 2) and could still apply to the relevant sections of Salvation in History.

² Salvation in History, p. 79.

noch nicht. This tension, as we have already noted, is to be found in all the main writings of the New Testament. It is not merely Lukan or Early-Catholic. It is also essential to the proclamation of Jesus and to his own understanding of himself and his mission.

It is this tension which helps to illuminate not only the sayings and passages which make specific reference to the 'final time', but which also enables the unity and continuity of New Testament salvation history to be preserved, from Jesus through the early church to Paul and John. What Cullmann is thus in fact suggesting is a kind of sich realisierende Eschatologie as distinct from both Schweitzer and Dodd. And Cullmann notes that although the latter has accepted this definition of eschatology he has not developed its implications.¹

It is this tension which is the new and distinctive thing about Jesus' eschatological proclamation and to his understanding of his mission. The kingdom is future, yet at the same time is realised in his own person. This is the key to Jesus' own understanding of salvation history.² He thinks implicitly in terms of the periods of salvation history,³ and foresees a period between his resurrection and his return.⁴

The temporal tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet' for the early church and for Paul and John is already sanctioned in its relation

¹Op.cit., (ET), p. 175.

²See German edition, p. 181.

³See German edition, p. 218.

⁴This heilsgeschichtliche time-span can, according to Cullmann, be deduced from Mk.9:1 par; Mk.13:30 par; and Matt.10:23.

to the person and proclamation of Jesus. The post-resurrection biblical witnesses interpret the constant, the 'already', in the light of the new events of the cross and resurrection. This helps to explain why they did not merely repeat the proclamation of Jesus or his own interpretation of himself.

For Cullmann then, the unity and continuity of salvation history depend upon this eschatological tension. However, we may note in passing that Cullmann's proof of its evangelical ubiquity rests upon further proofs concerning Jesus' messianic self-consciousness which he takes to be quite unassailable. It is this self-consciousness which informs Jesus of imminent death and resurrection and of an interval of time between these events and the Parousia. Cullmann requires this view in the interests of heilsgeschichtliche unity and continuity and particularly in order to avoid the positing of any radical discontinuity between the Proclaimer and the Proclaimed, as Bultmann and his pupils are wont to do.

While the latter view also has its difficulties, it is nevertheless the case that Cullmann's position is one which can only be maintained on the assumption that a great deal more can be read into the tantalising interstices of the synoptic material than we think. The position which he adopts also means that he has to have recourse to theories concerning, for example, how the teaching of Jesus was transmitted, how his messianic consciousness developed, how he differentiated in thought between the different Jewish notions of the son of Man, the Messiah, and the Suffering Servant.¹

¹ The response to some of these problems from the position of Bultmannian orthodoxy is briefly summed up, for example, in Hans Conzelmann's essay, 'Jesus von Nazareth und der Glaube an den Auferstandenen' in the collection Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus, p. 197.

It is unnecessary to discuss these problems at any length. However, in passing we might note that the world might after all have been able to contain all the learned treatises on these difficult problems if more attention had been paid to the fact that the New Testament itself is to say the least very reticent about them. And on the other hand, if the facts about Jesus' Messianic self-consciousness and about the way in which he consciously distinguished between the prevalent contemporary and conflicting ideas of son of Man, Messiah and Suffering Servant should indeed prove to be among the more 'historically controllable' material of the New Testament and more easily ascertainable and verifiable than its silences on these matters, there still remains the problem concerning the relationship between these facts as historical facts and simultaneously as salvation-historical facts or as eschatological facts. Cullmann's solution to this problem unfortunately would not help very much since it would re-introduce all the difficulties of his understanding of event and interpretation once again.

According to Cullmann however, interpretation is really a matter of spiritual comprehension. Nevertheless, one tends to feel that having once dismantled his discussion of event and interpretation and exposed some of its difficulties, this appeal to the Spirit is not quite sufficient to overcome them and therefore somewhat premature.¹ For this reason, although not for this reason alone, one is tempted to reiterate the frequently expressed conviction that the main trouble with Cullmann's Heilsgeschichte is that it contains more Heil than Geschichte.² A

¹ See e.g., Salvation in History, (ET), p. 98.

² See e.g., the remarks of John McIntyre in his book The Christian Doctrine of History, p. 109.

careful reading of Salvation in History is more likely to reinforce this sentiment than impair it.

Cullmann's apology for salvation history indeed makes it very difficult to see the wood for the trees. There can be no doubt of course that this is certainly wholly unintentional. Its real difficulty however is its impenetrability. It would seem that this is the price which has to be paid for pressing the New Testament into any kind of neat and manageable scheme, and especially if it is a scheme put forward not simply as a hermeneutical aid, but as a valid and realistic description of 'the way things are'.

The neat but impersonal geometry of the straight ascending line of Christ and Time and the more asymmetrical geometry of the Mellenlinie of Salvation in History (which cannot but commend themselves to those whose theology is in a special sense scientific), quite apart from the question about whether these are in fact discernible as principles in which the whole of the New Testament coheres or not, renders them rather questionable as hermeneutical aids in any case. Time, whether conceived as a straight line, a fluctuating line, a cycle or a spiral, has a tendency toward complete neutrality¹ even though each variety is able to exert its own peculiar fascination.

The final effect of Cullmann's salvation history, quite contrary to his intention, thus permits the eventfulness of the Christ-event to be sacrificed in the interests of a well-laid plan. If it were the case that the concern of the New Testament was essentially to present us with this kind of Weltanschauung, the event with which it deals would long ago

¹The strictly temporal character of the tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet' for these reasons also becomes artificial. This leaves aside the parallel question as to what sort of tension can exist between an 'already' and a 'not yet' which has in effect become a 'still not yet'.

have totally succumbed to the power of legend and myth thus suffering the same fate as so many others. One is almost bound to suggest that the end result of Cullmann's scheme comes very close to just this, for the eventfulness of the Christ-event under the cover of Heilsgeschichte is allowed to disappear into near oblivion through the trapdoor of history itself. The Geschichte, and even what Cullmann would want to call Historie, become totally submerged under the impersonal geometry of a very dubious kind of Heil.

The problems which we have encountered in the course of our examination of what we consider to be the main directions in Cullmann's argument make it extremely difficult to state with more clarity and precision his own final position with regard to the problem of the correlation of Erweisnis und Deutung, history and revelation, or history and eschatology. We may however now attempt to sum up some of our own difficulties about these difficulties.

For one thing, Cullmann's admission that we must accept that for the purposes of modern historical research a distinction must be made between event and interpretation would initially suggest that as far as he himself is concerned, a problem of correlation at least exists and therefore has to be taken seriously and carefully analysed. However, the immediately subsequent withdrawal of this concession and the fact that he omits any discussion of the difficulties of the problem as such would seem to indicate that it may either be quickly solved or conveniently disregarded. It is not unfair to say that Cullmann manages to do both. His proposed solution to the problem takes the form of an appeal to the alleged hermeneutical presuppositions of the biblical witnesses as we have seen. This tactic in turn, as we have also noted, enables him

virtually to disregard the requirements of the modern historical method and understanding in favour of which the distinction was granted in the first place. This is the principal difficulty in Gullmann's whole position and it is for this reason that we have already dealt with it and some of its implications at some considerable length.

One among many of the further implications of this basic and initial difficulty also affects his treatment of revelation. We have seen that the 'both'/'and' of event and interpretation are, if our interpretation is correct, for the biblical witnesses at least, inseparably united in Heilsgeschichte as revelation. Gullmann has also argued further that it is certainly not with the help of the distinction between event and interpretation demanded by modern historical methodology that we also may be enabled to discern the fact that with regard to revelation, event and interpretation are correlatively indivisible, but with the help of the Spirit.

In this connection we have already suggested that while recourse to the Spirit is indeed in most cases quite in order, Gullmann's sudden move in this direction, though not totally unjustifiable, is nevertheless somewhat premature.

It might therefore be argued that because of this, and once again because of his avoidance of the event-interpretation issue in connection with modern historical research, revelation, as Gullmann appears to understand it, seems to display many of the characteristics of an imposition which comes to us just as much genkrecht von hinten (if the construction is possible), as it comes genkrecht von oben. In this way revelation is made to possess many of the traits of a historically limited, self-sufficient and authoritative fait accompli. It thus may

be said to bear within itself its own claim. The claim is an arbitrary one however, for it is not a claim that we should recognise, properly understood; it is a claim which rather calls for submission.¹

As a critic of imposed revelation of any kind there was no-one more sensitive and acute than John Oman. He suggested that if it actually is the case that revelation is imposed, then every form of genuinely historical revelation must inevitably become 'an irrelevance and an encumbrance'.² While it must certainly be stressed that Gullmann is by no means open to this kind of criticism in all respects, there is at the same time a sense in which he is for the reason that his own notion of revelation as a heilsgeschichtliche scheme does tend to obscure and even to dissolve the revelation of the Christ event as far as its actual eventfulness is concerned.

A further point may also be briefly mentioned. It may be said that Bultmann's criticism of C.H. Dodd is perhaps also pertinent to Gullmann's analysis as well for there is a sense in which like Dodd, Gullmann also finds it possible to refer to eschatology or revelation in purely historical terms and therefore undialectically. Evidence for this can be found, for example, in Gullmann's treatment of one aspect of the event-interpretation complex in particular, namely, in his discussion of the relationship between history and myth. In the course of this discussion he argues that from the point of view of the Bible, both history and myth are to be found on one and the same historical level.³

¹ Cf. the critical remarks on Gullmann's notion of sich einreihen above.

² John Oman, Grace and Personality, p. 137.

³ Although it must again be admitted that Gullmann's reader is left in some confusion with regard to this matter as well. Cf. note 2, p. 128 above.

For our present purposes, however, it is not necessary to examine this problem in detail. The difficulties which emerge from this aspect of his discussion are again of the sort which ultimately stem from Gullmann's unwillingness to make any proper use of that fundamental distinction to which we have already perhaps too frequently referred, and from his having omitted to examine some of its possible implications for biblical interpretation.

Finally, a word in connection with the problem of the presence of the past to which we have referred in Chapter Two above.

From Gullmann's point of view it would seem that if the past can be said to be in any sense present at all then it is present either as a theory about it, or, despite his protestations to the contrary, that it is present as a special kind of history which runs parallel to 'secular' history and from which it can be objectively distinguished.

In the course of our own discussion of Gullmann's views these criticisms have already been raised and examined. We have also attempted to evaluate Gullmann's response to them. They are points which have also been made often enough in the past, for instance, with regard to Christ and Time. However, while we would like to maintain that these criticisms of Gullmann's possible understanding of the problem of the presence of the past are still valid enough as far as the more recent Salvation in History is concerned as well, they do not quite penetrate to the most serious difficulty which in this respect his position involves. The principal difficulty is rather that from Gullmann's standpoint the interpreter must deny himself and his present in order to confront himself with the past. The past in this sense can be grasped and understood only from within its own world. The Bible, and the events with which it deals can be

comprehended only in terms of its own internal presuppositions.

Elsewhere¹ we have already had occasion to refer to this as an attempted exercise in self-abnegating identification and have also noted some of the further difficulties which such a projected enterprise might involve. In Cullmann's case the principal difficulty is that we would be required to appropriate interpretations which have become external to ourselves and our world. It might even be argued that Cullmann's understanding and presentation of the original interpretations in the form of a Heilsgeschichte has tended to render them even more external. Stripped of its fearful symmetry it might prove more acceptable. However, what in fact turns out to be the sharpest obstacle which must continually be overcome in the course of Cullmann's discussion is really his certainty as to the precise nature of those presuppositions.²

¹ See pp. 23-24 of Chapter Two above.

² For a recent and most excellent discussion of some of the problems which this involves see James Barr's Old and New in Interpretation, especially Chapter 6, pp. 171ff. In the following paragraph which we quote in full and which is most appropriate to Cullmann's view, Barr's use of the terms 'internal' and 'external' is different from our own. Professor Barr writes: 'The fundamental error in purist thinking is the supposition that by taking an 'internal' stance we somehow guard against error. Beliefs of this kind only support the complacency of the church culture and damage the Church's ability to meet with the world in humility. The most serious and critical conflicts do not arise from the entrance of concepts and mental structures from outside, but from the turning of what is within the tradition into a support for human aggrandizement and complacency. To direct the gaze of the Church outward against what is pagan, Hellenistic, or otherwise external, is to miss the tragedy of what happens within the tradition and so to deepen the self-satisfaction of what is traditional. All this is not without its relation to such questions as the way in which theology is connected to philosophy. We may agree with important currents in modern theology that theology is not dependent on a philosophy. It is nevertheless quite false to suppose that independence of philosophy is a kind of guarantee for the rightness of a theology.' (Op.cit., p. 173).

With these remarks we must however now bring our examination of Gullmann's position to a close. If his version of salvation history is found unacceptable, could it be re-presented with more confidence in a somewhat modified form? Or will it be necessary to relinquish his notion of Heilsgeschichte altogether? These are questions to which we must return in the final chapter.

In the meantime, we must now examine our theme against the background of the views of Rudolf Bultmann whose response to the latter question has always been the firmest of affirmatives and who has replaced the idea of Heilsgeschichte with that of the Heilsgeschehen or the Heilsereignis.

CHAPTER SIX : HISTORY AND THE ESCHATOLOGICAL EVENT

Rudolf Bultmann

CHAPTER SIX

HISTORY AND THE ESCHATOLOGICAL EVENT

It is mainly around Bultmann more than any other modern theologian that the controversy about history and eschatology rages. The volume of literature alone on this single aspect of Bultmann's thought is sufficient witness to the fact.¹ Its quantity may be further accounted for in that the position which he has adopted and consistently maintained with regard to the question of history and eschatology is one which makes its presence felt in his treatment of the many other theological problems which at first sight may appear to have no obvious connection with either of these particular themes.

It is better to arrive than to travel hopefully. However, our precarious odyssey, though almost at an end, must continue. If our journey is not quite over the same may be said about the whole course of the debate about these problems. We have been able to discuss only a relatively small fraction of it. However, the circumference of the circle around which we have travelled, (if not with certainty, at least with hope), beginning with Schweitzer and taking in the contributions of Dodd and Gullmann on the way, almost closes with Bultmann.

Grounds for this opinion have already been indicated in our examination of Schweitzer's *Consistent Eschatology* in Chapter Two, where

¹Cf., e.g., Günther Bornkamm's review and criticism of this literature in *Theologische Rundschau*, Neue Folge, 29 Jahrgang, Heft 1/2, June, 1963, pp. 33-141.

it was pointed out that there are certain elements in Schweitzer's approach which have paved the way for Bultmann's development of his own position and which bring him into closer proximity to the Schweitzer Forschungstradition than Bultmann himself would seem to be prepared to admit.

These elements may be reduced to two principal ones. There is first of all Schweitzer's conviction about the Jesus of history and his remark that if the Jesus of the Gospels is to be known at all then this must be the Jesus who 'is absolutely independent of historical knowledge'. This corresponds very closely to many of Bultmann's statements on the same theme including the most celebrated:

'Ich wende mich von allen geschichtlichen Begegnungen (auch der mit dem Christos kata sarka) ab und der einsigen Begegnung mit dem verkündigten Christus zu, der mir im Kerygma begegnet, das mich in meiner geschichtlichen Situation trifft.'¹

This is one of the insights of the Consistent School which Bultmann has adopted and of course proceeded to modify. The second element which Bultmann has also found fruitful in developing his own position is the Consistent School's emphasis upon Maherwartung, the notion of an imminent oncoming future. Again, with certain modifications, this notion is quite basic for the way in which Bultmann goes on to interpret eschatology and its significance for faith as eschatologische Existenz.²

¹ Kerygma und Mythos, Vol. I, p. 134.

² This point is also made by H.A. Dahl in his essay 'Eschatologie und Geschichte im Lichte der Qumrantexte' where he suggests that '...R. Bultmann has interpreted A. Schweitzer's concept of eschatology existentially'. See Zeit und Geschichte, Dankesgabe an R. Bultmann zum 80 Geburtstag, p. 4.

The presence of these elements noted, we may now turn to the task of presenting Bultmann's own position in more detail. Putting it in the form of a defensible generalisation it may be said that his position rests firmly upon the assertion that the Christ-event is an historical event, and, simultaneously and paradoxically, the eschatological event.¹ The present chapter will take the form of an extended commentary on this text.

In keeping with the form of previous chapters we shall first present an outline of Bultmann's approach to the problem of history and discuss what Bultmann understands by 'an historical event'. We shall then go on to outline and examine his interpretation of eschatology and its relationship to history and then conclude with some critical observations.

I

The Historical Event

In any attempt to come to grips with what Bultmann understands by an historical event some vital distinctions have to be made between the two terms which the German language unfortunately possesses for the one English word 'history': these are, Historie and Geschichte. It may be objected that this particular exercise has been undertaken with more than sufficient frequency in the past by the vast cloud of adulatory, denigratory or just plain puzzled commentators on Bultmann's work. Nevertheless some reference to the realities denoted by these two terms

¹ See for example, Bultmann's Glaube und Verstehehen, Vol. III, p. 168, and so frequently elsewhere that Bornkamm can say, 'Der Begriff der paradoxen Identität von Geschichte und Eschaton spielt bei ihm nun eine überaus bedeutende Rolle, ja er wird fast zu einer Art Zauberformel...' loc.cit., p. 134.

is necessary, for judging by the ways in which Bultmann applies the terms his dependence upon a doctrine of the duplex usus legis transposed into a historical key begins to become apparent. This understanding of history as twofold forms the core of Bultmann's preambula evangelii, his foil to eschatology. However, as we hope to show, when that moment arrives and when he comes to speak of the paradoxical identity of the historical and the eschatological, the crucial distinction between Historie and Geschichte is seen to suffer a rather curious fate.

The distinction between Historie and Geschichte will come into clearer focus if we begin by asking what Bultmann understands by Geschichtswissenschaft. In this connection as in many others Bultmann takes a lead from Heidegger, who writes:

'In der Idee der Historie als Wissenschaft liegt, dass sie die Ererschliessung des geschichtlich Seienden als eigene Aufgabe ergriffen hat.'¹

Parallel to this and somewhat less technically Bultmann says that the real aim of the study of history should be to disclose the richness of the possibilities of human existence and the ways in which human existence

¹ Sein und Zeit, p. 393. (Eighth Ed. 1957.) ET: 'The idea of historiography as a science implies that the disclosure of historical entities is what it has seized upon as its own task.' (Being and Time, p. 445.

Much of what Heidegger says about historiography depends upon his view of the ontologische Priorität des Daseins. For Bultmann's own view of this and for further evidence of his dependence upon Heidegger see for example his essay 'Die Geschichtlichkeit des Daseins und der Glaube' in Z.Th.K., N.F., XI, (1930), pp. 339-364, and translated in Existence and Faith, Ed. S. Ogden, pp. 92-110. And for two of the clearest expositions of this leitmotif of Heidegger's thought and its implications for Bultmann's theology see Johannes Körner's Eschatologie und Geschichte, especially chapters 6 and 7, and John Macquarrie's An Existentialist Theology.

has been understood in such a way as to present the questioner with the possibilities of his own existence.¹ And in another context Bultmann suggests that if he were required to answer the question, 'What is history for?', (or, 'What is Geschichtswissenschaft for?'), he would respond in much the same way as Collingwood does when he writes:

'My answer is that history is 'for' human self-knowledge... The value of history, then, is that it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is.'²

However, if the task of Geschichtswissenschaft is essentially to disclose to man the possible ways in which he may understand his life, there are basically two ways in which these possibilities may be viewed. They may, on the one hand, be viewed from the standpoint of the person whose interest in them may amount to a desire to extend the frontiers of his knowledge about them perhaps with a view to comparing them as closely and objectively as possible; or, they may be viewed from the standpoint of the person who, nich entscheidend, and deeply disturbed about the problem of his own life, finds himself in the kind of situation which requires that he must choose whether he will exist in this or that

¹ See, for example, Glauben und Verstehen, Vol. II, p. 289: '...ihr Sinn darin besteht, den Reichtum der Möglichkeiten menschlichen Existierens und Existenzverständnisses aufzudecken und so dem Betrachter die Möglichkeiten seiner eigenen Existenz zu zeigen.'

² The Idea of History, p. 10; and see also Bultmann's History and Eschatology, pp. 136-137. Despite Bultmann's very warm approval of Collingwood's views, he indicates that he would prefer to lay more stress than Collingwood does on the role which decision must play in the event of historical understanding. Bultmann is also more concerned than Collingwood is to emphasise that 'what man is', man's essentiality, is not something which intrudes upon man from the past as an already realised possibility, nor as a finished ideal toward which he might be encouraged to approximate. Man's essentiality is always future and yet to be realised. It is a possibility which he must continually aim at and grasp in decision.

possibility or not, or whether he is willing or not to understand himself anew in view of some new possibility which arises to put his present self-understanding in question.¹

The distinction between Historie and Geschichte is now perhaps minimally clarified. There is on the one hand Historie as the study of objective facts and the gathering of information about them. On the other hand there is Geschichte, history as human encounter.

For the sake of further clarification, and in order to give some indication of the wider importance of this distinction for Bultmann's views on our theme, it will be useful at this stage to attempt to open it up a little by re-introducing this same distinction in a different form. It is largely in terms of the distinction in this second form that Bultmann prefers to speak of the paradoxical identity of the historical and the eschatological, especially in his more recent writings on the subject.²

In this form, the distinction is between the Wie and the Was of any historical document, event or person, and its Dass. Rather than deal with the distinction in this form (and its more general implications) with reference to the numerous and helpful examples drawn from history, literature and art which are to be found scattered throughout his writings,

¹ According to Bultmann any historical document, event, person or teaching can be viewed in this twofold manner. Taking some of Bultmann's more general remarks on this subject we may apply them to the teaching of Jesus. On the one hand, it can be viewed in terms of a 'Vermittlung und Aufnahme von Tatsachen-Wissen oder von Prinzipien-Wesen. Diese Lehre gegenüber, die im Verhältnis zum Gelehrten zufällig und nebensächlich ist, hat das Verstehen den Charakter des "Sehens", des sich aus der Distanz vollziehenden Betrachtens.' On the other hand, it can disclose to me... 'die Möglichkeit meines Daseins, die ich je entschliessend ergreifen muss, und lehrt mich so, mich selbst neu zu verstehen... Diese Lehre gegenüber, die selbst zu dem Gelehrten gehört, hat das Verstehen den Charakter des "Hörens", des Sich Angeredet-Wissens, der Entscheidung.' Glauben und Verstehen, Vol. I, p. 160.

² As, for example, in his essay, 'Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus' Heidelberg, 1960, (hereinafter to be referred to simply as Das Verhältnis).

we shall examine it in its more specific connection with the use to which he has put it in his own work. In order to illustrate the distinction and to pursue some of its implications we may begin with his own references to it in the introduction to Jesus.¹

The first passage of importance and requiring some comment runs as follows:

'There is an approach to history which seeks by its method to achieve objectivity;...such an approach is extremely successful in dealing with that part of history which can be grasped by objective method, for example in determining the correct chronological sequence of events, (chronologisch fixierbaren Vorgänge des Geschehenen), and in so far forth is always indispensable. But an approach so limited misses the true significance of history. It must always question history solely on the basis of particular presuppositions, of its own method, and thus quantitatively it collects many new facts out of history, but learns nothing genuinely new about history and man.'²

This historical method, then, concerns itself primarily with the Was and Wie of history, with the factual content of historical sources, for example, or the establishment of the date, location and circumstances of any event and its possible causal relationship to another event or within any given sequence of events.

In order to be true to their method, historians of this persuasion will confine themselves to establishing the facts as objectively as possible. They should refrain (although in practice they cannot) from making judgements of value. Their inevitable tendency to do so, however, is not initially due to the fact that it is impossible for those who have adopted this method to suffer the total suspension of their subjectivity, but because a prior value judgement has already been made with reference

¹First ed. 1926. Passages cited here are from Collins Fontana edition Jesus and the Word, London, 1958.

²Jesus and the Word, p. 12.

to the status of the method itself. Indeed, as Bultmann suggests, it has already succeeded in setting itself above or outside the history with which it is allegedly concerned in such a way that the view of history which its practitioners are required to adopt is analogous to the way in which we view nature.¹

There is however one further point which is worth noting. The approach to history which by its method seeks to attain objectivity inasmuch as it can determine the 'correct chronological sequence of events' is a method which, at least according to this passage, finds Bultmann's qualified acceptance, for it would seem that apart from this method the facts cannot be determined at all. If they can be established in some other way or by means of some other method Bultmann nowhere ventures to suggest how.² In so far as this method can establish and determine the facts it is 'always indispensable'.

The function of such a method then is essentially to determine the Wie and the Was. However, if it should stop abruptly at this point it forfeits the right to be genuinely called Geschichtswissenschaft, the aim of which, as we have seen, is not simply to establish the objective

¹One of Heinrich Ott's criticisms is that for Bultmann, Historie and Natur are identical, and therefore that Historie and Natur on the one hand, and Geschichte on the other, constitute two separate 'spheres of being' (Seinsphären). This is the burden of the first chapter of Ott's Geschichte und Heilsgeschichte in der Theologie Rudolf Bultmanns. It might be wished that Bultmann's remarks on the problem of nature and history could be clearer. We may only note however, that while some of Bultmann's remarks on the subject do suggest that there is a close similarity between Natur and Historie as the subject-object method understands it, he also says that 'there cannot be impersonal observation of history in the same sense (emphasis mine) that there can be impersonal observation of nature'. (Jesus and the Word, p. 11.) In what precise sense Bultmann unfortunately does not say. What is at least reasonably clear, as we hope to show against Ott, is that for Bultmann, the Wie and the Was of Historie are not so easily separable from the Das of Geschichte.

²This partial endorsement of the subject-object method by Bultmann distinguishes his views on the subject of history at least in one respect from those of Gogarten, whose rejection of the 'subject-object schema' is much more explicit. See, for example, Demythologising and History, pp. 48-51.

facts but to disclose to the questioner of history die Möglichkeiten menschlichen Existierens und Existenzverständnisses.¹

In order to expand this slightly we may cite another passage from Jesus and the Word. This book, he reminds us, is 'in the nature of a continuous dialogue with history'. He goes on to say:

'Further, it should be understood that the dialogue does not come as a conclusion, as a kind of evaluation of history after one has learned the objective facts. On the contrary, the actual encounter with history takes place only in the dialogue. We do not stand outside historical forces as neutral observers; we are ourselves moved by them; and only when we are ready to listen to the demand which history makes on us do we understand at all what history is about.'²

Some of the implications of this understanding of history have already been outlined in Chapter Two above. There is therefore no necessity to enter again into any detailed discussion of this passage here. However, two very important points must be noted.

Firstly, 'the demand which history makes on us', history as address (Anrede), or history in terms of its Dasein can be recognised only in decision. The Dasein of history therefore cannot be properly grasped if we work with a definition of history such as 'event plus interpretation' (as, for example C.H. Dodd does), or as evaluation succeeding upon objective fact. In the situation of dialogue and decision the Wie and the Was on the one hand, and the Dasein on the other, can no longer be viewed as two temporally distinct moments in the event of historical understanding and self-understanding. We may therefore say that only sich entscheidend do the Wie and the Was become a Dasein, or that only sich entscheidend can Historie become Geschichte.

¹Cf. note 1, p. 159 above.

²Jesus and the Word, p. 11.

and that in the situation of dialogue and decision, Historie and Geschichte, as against Ott for example, do not present themselves as mutually exclusive.¹

If we have understood Bultmann correctly so far then we may say that the essential task of Geschichtswissenschaft is to elicit and present the address or the Bess of historical documents, persons and events to the questioner's present self-understanding. This is existential interpretation, (to introduce yet another necessary terminological complication). Properly understood therefore, Geschichtswissenschaft constitutes 'a call to historicity' (Ruf zur Geschichtlichkeit).² The hearing of and the response to this call is an existenziell decision.

There is thus a sense in which Geschichtswissenschaft, or existential interpretation still remains safely within the boundaries of the subject-object method. To take an example: by means of existential interpretation, the New Testament critic can present and clarify the proclamation of Jesus as a call to decision, as a possible address or Bess. However, whether this Bess is actually heard by others as address, and not merely as the evaluation of one New Testament scholar among others, is something which can be authenticated only in the personal, existenziell engagement of the questioner or hearer and which as such eludes objective description.³

¹References to Historie as 'secondary history' and to Geschichte as 'primary history' might possibly tend to encourage the opinion that they are mutually exclusive. See, for example, John Macquarrie's An Existentialist Theology, pp. 161-192, and Heinrich Ott, op.cit., p. 10.

²History and Eschatology, p. 136.

³From among the innumerable examples which Bultmann gives of the impossibility of objectifying existenziell acts we may cite some of his remarks on love: 'Ja auch sich selbst gegenüber kann der Liebende sein Handeln nicht als Liebe ausweisen. Er würde sich sonst neben sein Tun stellen und nicht mehr darin sein.' Glauben und Verstehen, Vol.I, p. 239.

A third passage from Jesus and the Word also helps to illustrate our second point as well as Bultmann's method and intention. He writes:

'...I would lead the reader not to any "view" of history, but to a highly personal encounter with history. But because the book (Jesus and the Word) cannot in itself be for the reader his encounter with history, but only information about my encounter with history, it does of course as a whole appear to him as a view, and I must define for him the point of observation. Whether he afterwards remains a mere spectator is his affair.'¹

Reference to 'my encounter with history' presupposes a prior existenziell recognition of the address or the Dass of Jesus' proclamation on Bultmann's part. However, the writing of Jesus and the Word makes it necessary for him to stand outside this personal encounter with history. To use Schubert Ogden's terms,² this therefore constitutes a movement from Bultmann's existenziell encounter with the proclamation of Jesus (possibility in fact) to the description of this encounter as a general possibility, (possibility in principle), from existenziell encounter to existenzial interpretation. For Bultmann then, existenziell encounter essentially serves the interests of existenzial interpretation or Geschichtswissenschaft. His Jesus and the Word is therefore an attempt to exhibit the proclamation of Jesus as a possible call to decision. It is the explication of Jesus' proclamation as a Dass, a geschichtliche possibility.

Hopefully, we are now in a better position to sum up what Bultmann understands by history and what he means by 'an historical event'. Despite the presence of some apparent inconsistencies in his use of the terms Historie and Geschichte, and historisch and geschichtlich, the final position which he adopts is fairly clear.³

¹ Jesus and the Word, p. 13.

² Christ without Myth, pp. 117-126.

³ For a detailed explanation of these apparent irregularities in his use of the terms see Johannes Körner's Eschatologie und Geschichte, pp. 117ff.

Firstly, as regards Historie and the Wie and the Wag of Historia: these categories describe history wie es gewesen ist, occurrences which have happened at a certain place in space and time. For example, a historische description of Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz will provide information about such things as dates and times, weather conditions, whether adverse or favourable to Napoleon, the nature of the terrain, the numbers of cannon, cavalry and infantry, the way in which they were deployed, and so on. Again, from the historische point of view, the proclamation of Jesus can be examined in much the same way. From such a perspective it might be discovered that Jesus possibly spoke Aramaic, that the form and content of his teaching owed a great deal to the traditional teaching of the rabbis, that he had a preference for the parable as the form by means of which his teaching might best be conveyed.

As far as Bultmann is concerned, the objective establishment and recognition of such past facts is not only possible but also 'indispensable' for genuine historical interpretation and understanding.¹ What he does dispute, however, is whether history is sufficiently comprehended when seen in this way, and he denies this largely because Historie, with its very necessary but limited concern for the Wag and Wie is bound to select its facts out of the historical process, abstracting them from the complex and living reality of the Geschichte in which we are inevitably involved, and leaving them suspended in an area outside the context of the 'historical forces by which we are moved'.²

¹ See, for example, History and Eschatology, p. 116, and the passage from Jesus and the Word, p. 12, already cited on p. 161 above.

It might be argued that one of the most obvious results of Bultmann's own historisch research into the proclamation of Jesus is his Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition, the necessary correlative to his more geschichtlich Jesus and the Word.

² Jesus and the Word, p. 11.

Secondly, and with reference to Geschichte and the Dasein, Bultmann says that 'it is only together with their meaning and importance'¹ that such events as Napoleon's victory or the proclamation of Jesus become geschichtlich. Their nature as geschichtlich is recognised only from within the context of a personal encounter with their Dasein or address. We also presume that this is what Bultmann means when he writes:

'To each historical phenomenon belongs its future, a future in which alone it will appear as that which it really is.'²

This is to say, a historical (geschichtlich) event is recognised as such only from within the situation of understanding encounter with the future (i.e., the meaning or importance, or the Dasein) which is integral to that event. And further, provided that we have understood him correctly, Bultmann would insist that the meaning or importance of any event is not to be understood as 'event plus interpretation', or as evaluation supervening upon event, but as being already implicit within the event of encounter itself.

However, the most important point which emerges from this is that for Bultmann a historical (geschichtlich) event, as distinguished from a historisch event, can be defined as such only from within the situation of the participating subject and from within the event of that subject's personal encounter with the geschichtliche Dasein or address of that event.³ We have selected Jesus and the Word as not only providing

¹ History and Eschatology, p. 117, (emphasis mine).

² Glauben und Verstehen, Vol. III, p. 113, History and Eschatology, p. 120.

³ J. K rner writes: 'So steht "geschichtlich" bei Bultmann prim r vor "Geschichte"; nicht von dem Geschehen das der Historiker zum Thema hat, wird es abgeleitet, sondern von der Geschichtlichkeit der Existenz.' (Eschatologie und Geschichte, p. 118).

the best illustration of this main point, but also as a means by which Bultmann's view of history may be seen in actual notion. This book re-presents his own personal encounter with history (Geschichte). It presupposes a geschichtliche encounter with the proclamation or the word of Jesus. However much or little he may know or need to know about the Weg and the Wag of the 'bearer'¹ of this word, Bultmann himself is in no doubt that it was Jesus who bore it.² We may say that to the extent that he was the bearer of that word, Bultmann's encounter is an encounter with the geschichtliche Jesus, with a geschichtliche Dasein.

The combination of geschichtlich with the Dasein in this last sentence needs to be stressed. However, we shall not be in a position to clarify or to justify this emphasis until we have discussed Bultmann's understanding of the eschatological event. This is the point at which Bultmann '(wendet sich) von allen geschichtlichen Begegnungen (auch der mit dem Christos kata sarka) ab und der einzigen Begegnung mit dem verkündigten Christus zu'.³ This Wende will be the subject of the following section.

II

The eschatological event

Bultmann's step from history to eschatology is perhaps best summed up in his reply to Julius Schniewind's objection that Bultmann

¹ Jesus and the Word, p. 152.

² Op.cit., p. 15 and p. 17.

³ Cf. note 1, p. 156 above.

tends to ignore Historie and seek refuge in Geschichte. Having outlined the aim and method of Jesus and the Word, Bultmann goes on to say:

'The Jesus of history is not kerygma, any more than my book was. For in the kerygma Jesus encounters us as the Christ - that is, as the eschatological phenomenon par excellence...So far, then, from running away from Historie and taking refuge in Geschichte, I am deliberately renouncing any form of encounter with a phenomenon of past history, including an encounter with the Christ after the flesh, in order to encounter the Christ proclaimed in the kerygma, which confronts me in my historic situation. That, in my view, is the only way to preserve the paradox or skandalon of Christian eschatology, which asserts that the eschaton has actually entered history.'¹

If the perhaps not so peculiar combination of Kant and Wittgenstein may be permitted, it almost does look as though Bultmann has climbed the ladder of history in order to kick it away and so make room for the leap of faith. However that may be, we must first of all attempt to explain and account for this 'deliberate renunciation' as briefly as possible. The reasons for it are derived not from his understanding of history, but from his view of eschatology or revelation.

The renunciation is made 'in order to encounter the Christ proclaimed in the kerygma'. Such a renunciation is required for one thing because the essential 'meaning or importance' of the Christ-event is neither historisch nor geschichtlich but eschatological, (although for Bultmann, as we shall see, the kerygma does retain a historische element).

As is well known, Bultmann also takes the view that revelation is present only in the kerygma. He places the strongest possible emphasis on the fact that 'Jesus Christus ist nur in der Predigt zugänglich'.² It is the kerygma alone which proclaims the paradoxical event of revelation,

¹ Kerygma and Myth, (ET), p. 117.

² E.g., Glauben und Verstehen, Vol. I, p. 180.

that a historische event is the eschatological event,¹ that God has acted decisively in this past event to redeem man and that he continues to do so to the same purpose in and through its continued kerygmatic presence.

Further, what the kerygma does, according to Bultmann, as an insoluble compound not of Geschichte and eschatology but of Historie and eschatology, is to precipitate geschichtliche encounter and decision. In this connection he is fond of quoting Melancthon's 'To know Christ is to know his benefits'.² In this situation there are principally two coincident moments. There is the acceptance (or rejection) of faith or authentic existence, which must be received as God's gift, since revelation carries with it a prior negation of every human effort to attain authentic existence apart from the grace of God, and which in so doing also shatters any human presumption that revelation itself is at man's disposal (verfügbar). Then, secondly, though inseparably, there is the concomitant recognition that 'God was in Christ'.

It is now perhaps sufficiently clear that it is primarily Bultmann's insistence upon the Unverfügbarkeit of revelation and its presence pro me in the kerygma and nowhere else which prompts his sudden renunciation. With regard to Historie this implies that the reality of revelation or of the Heilsgeschehen cannot be reduced to a certain number of historical (historische) statements about the Wie and the Wann of Jesus. Nor, with regard to Geschichte, is it possible to encounter God's revelation in Christ by means of Geschichtswissenschaft as Bultmann himself understands

¹E.g., Das Verhältnis, p. 8; Glauben und Verstehen, Vol.III, p. 168.

²E.g., Kerygma und Mythos, (Ger.), Vol.II, p. 184.

it. Geschichtswissenschaft can certainly lead to a geschichtliche encounter with the historische Jesus. This is the burden of Bultmann's Jesus and the Word as we have seen. Nevertheless, it is impossible for any kind of Geschichtswissenschaft, no matter how refined, to find 'any traces of the epiphany of God in Christ'.¹ Therefore, if the event of revelation could be confirmed (or rejected) on the basis of Historie or of Geschichtswissenschaft, it would mean that it is wholly subject to human control and manipulation, and in addition, on the basis of Historie or Geschichtswissenschaft what must be said cannot be said, namely,

'...what is said by the proclamation of Christ - the God has loved us in Christ and reconciled us to himself...For the love directed to me - and this alone can make me a new creature - cannot be demonstrated by historical observation. It can only be promised to me directly; and this is what is done by the proclamation. To go behind the Christ who is preached is to misunderstand the preaching; it is only in the word, as the one who is preached, that he encounters us, that the love of God encounters us in him.'²

Judging by this passage and similar remarks elsewhere, one might easily gain the impression that with the renunciation of any possible historical encounter the essential relationship between history and revelation is abruptly and decisively severed, and consequently, that in the interests of consistency, Bultmann should now be in a position to declare that faith is possible apart from the history of the Christ-event altogether. For Bultmann however, the renunciation of any possibility of encounter with revelation on the basis of either Historie or Geschichtswissenschaft does not render the essential paradox of christian faith nugatory. On the contrary, it serves to intensify the

¹Kerygma und Mythos, Vol.I, (Ger.), p. 134.

²From Bultmann's essay, 'Revelation in the New Testament' in Existence and Faith, p. 87.

paradox which the kerygma alone can express, namely, that a historische (not a geschichtliche) event is the eschatological event.

In order to come closer to the nerve of Bultmann's view we must now examine what it is that for him constitutes the kerygma. In this way some of the difficulties which his position involves will become more apparent.

Bultmann's position with regard to kerygma and history may now be summed up as follows: What the kerygma serves to communicate is the paradox that revelation, as God's word 'promised to me directly' and as present eschatological event, can be confirmed by neither Historie nor Geschichte, yet that revelation is nevertheless inseparably bound to a past historical (historische) event. To this extent the kerygma proclaims a historical fact, (historische Tatsache).¹ In order to obviate the possible criticism that once that fact is communicated the kerygma then becomes superfluous, or the parallel suggestion that the fact once communicated the kerygma might subsequently be 'legitimised' with reference to the Historie, he asserts that fact and interpretation, or Historie and kerygma are indivisible. As Bultmann himself puts it: 'The kerygma itself is part of the fact',² or elsewhere in a slightly different way when he maintains that the meaning of this historische event is 'nothing other than the establishment of this Word - the proclamation of this Word itself',³ or that 'the Word of the Christian proclamation and the history which it communicates...are one'.⁴ (These

¹ Glauben und Verstehen, Vol.I, p. 241.

² Op.cit., p. 241.

³ Glauben und Verstehen, Vol.II, p. 16.

⁴ Das Verhältnis, p. 27.

remarks and similar ones open the way for some of his less guarded and more dramatic statements to the same effect, such as, 'Jesus rose into the proclamation'¹ and, 'History is swallowed up in eschatology'.²)

We may however ask whether anything further can be said about this Historie and its contingent³ attachment to the christian proclamation. The question is legitimate enough for as we have seen, Historie concerns the Wie and the Was which in principle are open to discovery and verification, and in so far as it is Historie and eschatology which constitute the kerygma, Bultmann's Durchgang verboten! sign above the kerygma is, on his own definition of Historie, beside the point. This much we might at least be permitted to assume in the light of his distinction between Geschichte and Historie and its implications.

A passage in one of his earlier essays at first encourages the faint hope that the Historie is open to some kind of description, which by his own definition it ought to be. However, the hope is quickly deflated. He writes:

'The kerygma includes the communication of facts. But the communication of facts does not serve, as it does elsewhere, simply to enrich the old understanding of the world, which I, the hearer already have. On the contrary, its intent is to dispel that understanding, since it communicates to me facts which have their meaning as divine acts, as events in a history of salvation. They are, in a word, eschatological facts. They are events the reality of which is incomprehensible on the basis of a given understanding of the world taken as a matter of principle. And as such they are undiscoverable by any investigation of the world.'

¹Das Verhältniss, p. 27.

²History and Eschatology, p. 37.

³See for example, Glauben und Verstehen, Vol.I, p. 37; (ET., Faith and Understanding, edited by R. Funk, p. 64).

⁴Op.cit., p. 158; (ET, p. 189).

This means for one thing that the facts are communicated not as a piece of historical information but in order to bring about the final commitment of faith. That these facts are 'incomprehensible on the basis of a given understanding of the world' is equivalent to saying that the kerygma does not require the Wie and the Was, for by definition these are in principle open to confirmation by what would certainly be called 'a given understanding of the world', namely, Geschichtswissenschaft.

This confronts Bultmann's interpreter with a number of questions. They can, for our present purposes however, be reduced to two, which may be posed with considerable ease, but answered only with extreme difficulty.

If the kerygma is the proclamation that a historical (historische) event is the eschatological event, and if, as we have noted, this Historie can not (or must not) be described in terms of its Wie and Was, what is its precise status in relation to the kerygma? The first question then is, why does the kerygma require this particular, and apparently rather spectral piece of history at all?¹ And secondly, if the kerygma's reference to Historie is necessary yet essentially non-informative with regard to that Historie, in what way does the kerygma actually speak of the Historie?

Within the context of our present discussion Bultmann's answer to the second question is the more relevant. Though in many ways a very

¹ The first question is not so important to our discussion at the moment. However, Bultmann's answer, which recalls his insistence upon the Unverfälschtheit of revelation, may be briefly stated. For example, he writes: 'The Word enters our world incidentally, contingently, as event. There is no guarantee which we could rely upon in believing.' (Glauben und Verstehen, Vol. I, p. 37.) This seems to mean that only as contingent can the address of the Word precipitate the eschatological decision which includes giving up every security and guarantee for the sake of radical openness to the future.

complex answer it is the one which finally determines the fate of his very important distinction between Historie and Geschichte which, if we have described his position correctly, already appears to be under considerable strain. At the same time, an outline and examination of his answer to this question will help to throw into relief some of the main difficulties in his position which have been selected for criticism.

How, then, does the eschatological kerygma speak about the historische event Jesus? Bultmann's remarks on this aspect of the matter are few and cryptic, and seldom, if ever, does he set them apart for extended commentary. We must nevertheless attempt to interpret them.

As we have already noted, the kerygma,¹ as the proclamation that the meaning of the historische event Jesus is eschatological, is paradoxical. The paradox which the kerygma expresses is that this historische event is the salvation-event (Heilserlebnis or Heilamachehen). Bultmann himself affords us some help when he expands this slightly with the suggestion that the paradox may be formulated in a different way, namely, that while the kerygma necessarily refers to a past event, the 'meaning and importance' of that event as the eschatological event is never past, but rather always and unendingly future.¹

Further, what the kerygma does is confront us with the final decision concerning our essentiality (Eigentlichkeit), which, as we have seen,² is correspondingly always before us, future or 'not yet'. And to the extent that the question of ourselves or our essentiality and the question of God are identical,³ this 'not yet' or this future can be said

¹ E.g., Kerygma and Myth, Vol. I, p. 36 (ET). 'Beyond time' or 'eternal' can for Bultmann denote constant Zukunftigkeit.

² Cf. note 2, p. 159 above.

³ Jesus Christ and Mythology, p. 53.

to be God's future (die Zukunft Gottes).

What Bultmann therefore seems to mean when, for example, he says that 'history is swallowed up in eschatology', is that in the eschatologische Augenblick of decision precipitated by the kerygma, our past and every past is momentarily dissolved in the sheer historical intensity of the present situation which the kerygma creates. Our past disappears in the presence of God's oncoming futurity, his presence-in-imminence, before the eschaton.

The most important point with regard to the decisively eschatological texture of this situation is therefore that we are rendered totally insecure with regard to the past. This insecurity is so radical that any appeal to past actions, decisions or achievements of our own and on our own behalf must be regarded as a lapse into Uneigentlichkeit, as a flight from the future and as a refusal to face the final decision and confrontation with the eschaton.

In the actual situation of decision then, our own past, or for that matter any past, as a field of facts, events, decisions or accomplishments, can therefore no longer be regarded as a court to which we may appeal in order to justify or secure our lives. Nevertheless, it is necessary that the situation which the kerygma creates should also include the evacuation of any belief we might have that we can justify our lives in this way. This is in fact what the kerygma does and this is its opus alienum. And in addition, this is the condition which must be present before the kerygma can accomplish its opus proprium, which is to promise and confer faith, freedom from the past and openness to and for the future.

With regard to the central paradox that a past historische event is the eschatological event these same conditions must predominate. This means that as a figure of the past, Jesus comes under the same kerygmatic veto in that his past-ness, his history as the narratable sequence of events disclosed to us by historical research, is made no less insecure than my own. Confrontation with the kerygma dissolves every past and in this connection the Jesus of history is not excepted. This being the case, according to Bultmann's view, the Jesus of history in this sense can never form the content of the kerygma.

If the kerygma does not merely tell Jesus' story, in what way does it then speak of him? Hopefully we are now in a better position to state and evaluate Bultmann's answer to this question which has already been posed above.¹

His answer runs as follows:

'That one does not need to go beyond the that (Dass) is shown by Paul and John in their way. Paul proclaims the Incarnate, Crucified and Resurrected One. That is, his kerygma requires of the life of Jesus only the that, that he lived and the fact of his crucifixion...John emphasises the humanity of Jesus, but does not reproduce any of the traits of this humanity, such as might be taken from the Synoptic gospels. The decisive thing is simply the that (that he lived).'²

It is necessary once again to offer an interpretation of these important remarks. Bultmann's proposal is that the Historie which is essential to the kerygma consists in the fact that Jesus lived and was crucified. The Wie and the Wag of his life and activity are unnecessary to it. We have seen that the 'meaning and importance' of this event is not historical but eschatological (as we have attempted to interpret 'eschatological' above). This event is God's act. When its meaning

¹Cf. p. 174 above.

²Das Verhltnis, p. 9.

as God's act is proclaimed, every possible historical security is swept aside in order that we may be genuinely confronted with the final decision. Bultmann seems to be suggesting that in this way we are pointed not so much to the fact that God has acted. If this were actually the case we might again be easily tempted to seek historical confirmation of it or attempt to 'legitimise' that action in 'the facts of the ministry of Jesus' and in Jesus' 'story'. We are pointed rather to the fact that God is about to act, that with every security gone his action is indeed already impinging upon the present.

When therefore the kerygma proclaims Jesus as the eschatological event it is asserting that his action is God's action. The Jesus Christ who is 'nur in der Predigt sündiglich', who is present in the proclamation 'and nowhere else' is God's presence and God's already imminent action. Therefore when this event is proclaimed, it is not proclaimed as a historical report which might subsequently be verified or falsified (or as Bultmann prefers, 'legitimised') by research. Therefore the minimal history which the kerygma requires is the That of the event's sheer givenness. And further, the That is not so much the That of its having happened at a certain time and place. It is rather the That of its happening now.

If our elucidation of Bultmann's twofold notion of history as Historie and Geschichte in the first section of this chapter is correct, and if, as we might normally be inclined to assume, this basic distinction is still being maintained in the context of any reference to the proclamation, then we should have expected that the Das would have retained its original corresponding connection with what Bultmann has defined as Geschichte.¹

¹ See p. 168 above.

However, we are now in a position to see that this is not the case. The Dass has been transferred in such a way as to correspond to the Historie, so that in relation to the kerygma, the distinction between Historie and Geschichte, which we have been led to understand is essential to his whole position, seems in fact either to have collapsed completely, or that both Historie and Geschichte have somehow become fused in Historie alone.¹

On a careful reading of Bultmann's writings one discovers that he himself has nowhere offered any clear explanation for this rather sudden transposition of categories. However, the principal reasons for it are not really all that difficult to find.

If Jesus is the eschatological event in the sense that he is ho Eschatos only in the proclamation and if no history is necessary to the proclamation apart from das Dass seines Gekommensins, then, as is Bultmann's primary intention, the notion of paradoxical identity is not only preserved; the tension of the paradox itself is raised to its highest possible pitch and almost reaches breaking-point.

As we have gathered from our examination of his distinction between Historie and Geschichte, no Anrede or Dass can possibly adhere to Historie. The paradox then that a Dass does belong to this particular Historie can be elicited only by the power of the kerygma. Bultmann's transposition of categories must therefore be seen primarily in the light of this one Mundex. The transposition is therefore not merely either careless or accidental; it is quite deliberate, and the move is made in this way partly in order to reinforce the paradoxical indissolubility of the

¹Cf. G. Bornkamm: 'Auffallend ist, dass überall dort, wo R.B. den Gedanken der paradoxen Identität ausspricht, die sonst für ihn so entscheidende Differenzierung von 'Historie' und 'Geschichte' nichts zu suchen hat und hier beide Begriffe von ihm promiscue, genauer gesagt; zur Bezeichnung des Historischen gebraucht werden.' (Theologische Rundschau, N.F., 29 Jahrgang, Heft 1/2, June, 1963, p. 135).

proclamation, and partly to emphasise all the more that the true significance of this event is mediated through the proclamation itself and in no other way. And this also helps to explain Bultmann's reiterated insistence that the Dasein of the geschichtliche Jesus (which for Bultmann, as we have seen, consists in the making-present of Jesus' eschatological proclamation by means of existential interpretation), is still not kerygma however implicitly kerygmatic it may be. This amounts to saying that it is not eschatological, or theological talk about Jesus, and that it never can be as long as we require some knowledge of the historical facts about it with which research can provide us for our interpretation of it.¹ Apart from the Dasein (together with the crucifixion) all the facts must be negated if the proclamation is to be truly the proclamation that this act is God's act. The validity of the proclamation as paradoxical depends upon the impossibility of describing the That. To conclude this section of our exposition of Bultmann's view we may quote him again to this same effect:

'It is precisely because it cannot be proved that the christian proclamation can ensure itself against the objection that it is nothing but mythology.'²

III

With some slight but perhaps significant alteration, the title of a much earlier and much celebrated essay might be appropriate as a description of our discussion of Bultmann's position with reference to

¹This is also the main standpoint from which Bultmann criticises those of his followers who have developed the historical techniques upon which the New Quest is based. Cf. Sect.V of Das Verhältnis, (pp. 18ff.).

²Kerygma und Mythos, Vol.I, p. 53. (EP, p. 44).

our theme up to this point: 'Rodolf Bultmann, ein Versuch ihn (etwas besser?) zu verstehen'. Be that as it may, we must now go on to examine one or two of the more important problems which he has left as a legacy.

We shall be concerned mainly with the problem of reductionism in Bultmann's approach and the relationship of this to the question of continuity or correlation, and also with the formlessness and lack of content which he allows to the That of revelation. Although the points of criticism to be made are therefore closely inter-related, they may to some extent be distinguished in the interest of clarity.

Our first comment concerns the way in which Bultmann expropriates the Dasein which, so to speak, pre-kerygmatically, refers to Geschichte, and transfers it from this sphere so that it applies to Historie. From the standpoint of his distinction between Historie and Geschichte we have learned that the two are not intended to be mutually exclusive. Once this point is grasped we are then almost bound to assume that his final position will rest firmly upon this distinction. We have discovered, however, that this is not the case.¹ With the kerygma, the distinction is rapidly dissolved; Historie and Geschichte are fused not into the latter as we might possibly have expected, but into Historie. One thus begins to fear that the essential notion of paradoxical identity has such a limitless number of facets that the only possible attitude when confronted by it is one of despair, or even a sacrificium intellectus. (One also may be led to suspect that while Bultmann might agree with the former suggestion while rejecting the latter, the grounds for his rejection of

¹cf. pp. 178-179 above.

it have never been too clear.)

It is however at this point that Gerhard Ebeling expresses most clearly the reason for the discomfort which many feel in connection with Bultmann's final position. Ebeling writes:

'...without going into the whole range of problems which this raises, we can at least make one point. Bultmann allows the legitimate (if we can assume this) theological use of the phrase, the That of the eschatological event, which is predicated of an historical (geschichtlich) event, to run over, in my opinion unjustifiably, into a use where the 'That' is applied in a purely historical (historisch) sense to the mere facticity of an historical event. For it is neither possible to establish an historical relationship to a mere That, as it were, in vacuo, nor is it in accordance with the theological meaning of the That that it should be predicated of an abstract historical fact. Rather the theological intention of talk about the That of God, is that it should be confessed and believed in relation to the What and the How of historic reality.'¹

Ebeling's criticism is well made and really requires no further elaboration.

Bultmann however might well respond in the terms of his famous mentor Kierkegaard, and argue that reasons can be given to indicate only that no reasons can be given for faith. For Bultmann there can be no historical legitimation for faith. He will permit only the That of Jesus' life and crucifixion as faith's necessary condition.

Nevertheless, following Bultmann's own analysis, Ebeling is right to point out the impossibility of establishing a historical relationship with a mere That. And this indeed is the most perplexing aspect of Bultmann's notion of the paradoxical identity of the historisch and the eschatological. The sphere of Geschichte is somewhat abruptly bracketed out, and after all, according to Bultmann himself, it is only within this sphere that there can be such a thing as genuine historical encounter, or

¹ Theology and Proclamation, pp. 68-69. (Theologie und Verkündigung, Tübingen, 1962.) The same point is taken up by Bornkamm, cf. op.cit., pp. 136-137.

a situation of Anrede and Entscheidung. Historie alone cannot provide these possibilities.

In his excellent analysis of Bultmann's theology, Bornkamm also makes this criticism¹ and goes on to suggest, again with justification, that Bultmann's formulation of the notion of paradoxical identity shows evidence of the inherent danger that the claim of revelation might almost be said to confront us as an 'apodictic decree', and correspondingly, faith, the decision for which it calls, a foolhardy act of blind obedience. And Bornkamm goes on to conclude that it seems not only improbable but possibly even contradictory to speak on the one hand about the Anredecharakter of the kerygma and of the history which the kerygma is said to contemporise, while at the same time this history is radically reduced (or, if the term may be permitted, entgeschichtlicht), to the purest and merest historische Dasein.

These general points lead immediately to another criticism which may be made in connection with and in addition to those of Ebeling and Bornkamm. It concerns our puzzlement as to why Bultmann should concede this minimum of history to the proclamation and yet at the same time reject as unnecessary certain other historical facts which he himself agrees (again within the bounds of his distinction between Historie and Geschichte), are in principle in no way essentially different from the historical fact of the That which in his view the kerygma does require.

This is of considerable importance as regards the problem of correlation, or as Bultmann prefers, the problem of the continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of the kerygma. In this

¹ Bornkamm, op.cit., pp. 136-137.

connection Bultmann's position is, to say the least, ambiguous, and to say the most, obscure.

For example, there are certain other historical facts which Bultmann is prepared to recognise. For one thing, there would seem to be no doubt in his mind as to the fact that Jesus also preached.¹ Not only this, he can quite safely characterise the *How* of Jesus' preaching as 'kerygmatic'² or as 'implicitly christological'.³

The whole problem is exceedingly complex. However, Bultmann's treatment of it requires a distinction between historical continuity and material relationship. (sachliche Verhältnis). That there is historical continuity between the historical Jesus and the kerygma as a historical phenomenon Bultmann is willing to admit. As he says: 'Without the historical Jesus there would be no kerygma. To this extent the continuity is self-evident.'⁴ That is to say, there is historical continuity in terms of a causal relation between these two historical phenomena, Jesus and the act of proclaiming. In this connection again, however, the bare facticity, the Dass, is the only necessary condition of the kerygma.

Now with reference to the question of the material relationship between the historical Jesus and the Christ of the kerygma Bultmann's answer is more ambiguous. It is chiefly within the context of the question

¹ See for example, Das Verhältnis, p. 23.

² Op.cit., p. 15.

³ Theology of the New Testament, Vol.I, p. 43.

⁴ Das Verhältnis, p. 8.

as to how the Proclaimer became the Proclaimed that the problem of material relationship arises, and it is in the attempt to find a solution to this problem that Bultmann re-introduces the notion of implicit and explicit christology or kerygma. This prepares one for the re-admission of the What and the How, however minimal. The expectation remains nevertheless unfulfilled. Or, as in another not unrelated context Bultmann might say, it is fulfilled only in its miscarriage!

When Bultmann is discussing the problem of the material relationship between the historical Jesus and the Christ of the kerygma in these terms, the christology which is implicit in Jesus' person and proclamation is said to find its explicit correlative in the kerygma. He defines the christological kerygma as 'the explicit form of response to the call to decision, of the (response of) obedience which acknowledges God's revelation in Jesus'.¹

If this is the case, and if a reasonably satisfactory answer to the problem of material relationship can be suggested in these terms, then it must appear that the What and the How of the historical Jesus are therefore not as irrelevant to the kerygma as we might have supposed from Bultmann's repeated emphasis on the mere Dasein of Jesus' historicity, for if the notion of implicit christology is to be a valid and useful one then it is necessary that we know some facts about the What and the How of Jesus and his preaching. In order to maintain that the problem may possibly be resolved in this way, Bultmann, as we have seen, is prepared to concede not only that we must know some facts of this kind but that we actually can know them.

¹Op.cit., p. 16.

Now as far as his whole treatment of the question of the material relationship between history and kerygma is concerned there would appear to be no more appropriate solution than this, namely, that the christological kerygma presupposes not only the That but also the What and the How of Jesus' person and proclamation and that by means of the kerygma which proclaims him the latter in particular are made explicit.¹

We are therefore surprised to discover that Bultmann goes on to reject this proffered solution to the question in the following terms; he writes:

'But where does all this take us? It certainly makes comprehensible the historical continuity between the work of Jesus and the kerygma. It makes it understandable how the Proclaimer becomes the One who is proclaimed.'

This however provides no adequate solution to the problem of factual unity between history and kerygma. He continues:

'...the demonstration that the kerygma goes back to the claim of Jesus which is contained in his work does not prove the factual unity of the work and message of Jesus with the kerygma. The discussion is here still moving within the field of discourse of the traditional historical and critical categories.'²

With some justification Bultmann is clearly determined to remind us once again that the historical facts of an implicit christology cannot prove the truth of the kerygma and that historical observation alone cannot demonstrate that Jesus was ho Eschaton. However, by denying that this can be achieved in such a way he finds himself again compelled

¹ Cf. Ebeling, op.cit., p. 70, where he suggests that such a solution to the problem would allow us 'to recognise beyond the mere That of the appearance of Jesus, the true importance of the person of Jesus'. It would demonstrate that 'the What of his appearance is the presupposition of the kerygma of Christ, because it implies it and is in turn made explicit by it'.

² Both of these passages are from Das Verhältniss, p. 17.

to exclude the dimension of Geschichte with its implied possibility of the dialogical reciprocity between history and kerygma which his own understanding of history requires. Thus we can hardly fail to observe that the way is thereby quickly re-opened for the sudden, and for Bultmann the apparently welcome return of the blank facticity of the Dasein.

There is however another related question which Bultmann seems to have managed to avoid. While his objection in this connection is valid enough, the question is not only whether a historical proof can legitimate the kerygma, but also whether historical research could demonstrate that the explicit kerygmatic response to the implicit christology of Jesus' person and proclamation is a misunderstanding or a mistaken response.¹ For one thing this would mean that if it could be shown (although in fact it has not) that the kerygma which proclaims Christ is an obviously mistaken interpretation of his person and work, then clearly Bultmann would have thereby found a much more urgent reason for abandoning altogether the whole idea of implicit and explicit christology. However, to the extent that, for quite obvious reasons, he cannot admit that the explicit kerygmatic response (either in the past or in the present) is a misunderstanding of Jesus' person and work, his eventual rejection of such a proposed solution to the problem of the sachliche Verhältnisse between history and kerygma in terms of implicit and explicit christology leaves us all the more perplexed.

For Bultmann then, the material unity between history and kerygma is to be found only in the That. We return now once again to Ebeling,

¹ Cf. Ebeling, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

to whom we are indebted for a good deal of what has been said by way of criticism of Bultmann. Ebeling again expresses very clearly the principal difficulty in Bultmann's final position. We may quote Ebeling at some length. He writes:

'Bultmann himself has shown this That to be the 'material unity of the ministry and proclamation of Jesus with the kerygma! The confusing thing here is that on the one hand the concept of the That is charged with the greatest possible meaning as the eschatological call to decision - we can now add: of the Word of God - which takes place here and now; on the other hand it is emptied of all meaning as the mere historicity of the person of Jesus...the confusing thing about Bultmann's interpretation remains that his concentration on the That, although it should actually be seen as an attempt to find an extremely wide theological concept for the Word of God, in fact has the appearance of a formal reduction to the mere fact that the Word comes to pass.'¹

It was with a very similar point that our criticisms of Bultmann began and here they must also end. It is hardly accidental that our criticisms have also moved in this circular fashion since at every point of possible entry into and through Bultmann's theology we are faced with the same problem of its formal reductionism. And while we can agree with much of his analysis and with many of his very profound insights, it is at this specific point that we must differ.

We must now bring our discussion of Bultmann to a conclusion. We may again repeat that for him Jesus is no Eschaton only in the christological kerygma or in the Word that proclaims him. The question may be asked, What does the Word proclaim? Nothing; that is, nothing apart from the That of his life which in turn is transformed by the Word itself into the That of God's act. Or, to luxuriate for one fleeting moment in Bultmann's own love of paradox: the That is the What in which

¹Ebeling, op.cit., pp. 72-73.

Jesus and the kerygma are continuous. In this sense alone can there be any correlation or continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of the kerygma. It does not necessarily go too far to say that for Bultmann this continuity can be effected only by a linguistic miracle,¹ and in this sense Bultmann is possibly right. It is however with his abstract and formal conception of the correlatives that we feel we must disagree.

We may return for a moment to our adaptation of Collingwood's distinction between 'outside' and 'inside' and apply this to Bultmann's position.

The eschatological 'meaning and importance' of the Christ-event is something which can be expressed by means of the Word alone, according to Bultmann. The Word, the kerygma which proclaims Christ, continually resists objectification in the historical Jesus or anywhere else. The Word is therefore expressive of the 'inside' of the Christ-event, and Bultmann firmly maintains that this 'inside' can never become an 'outside' in that it repeatedly eludes checks and verifications of every kind.

One consequence of this view, as we have seen, is that of revelation, it may only be said that it happens. Van A. Harvey writes:

'In liberal theology and in orthodoxy, the picture of Jesus' life gave some content to such things as self-surrender, obedience, love and faith. In Bultmann's theology, the act of revelation is contentless. It is a happening with no structure and in no way positively informs the pattern of faith.'²

We have also had occasion to be critical of Bultmann in this connection.

¹This latent aspect of Bultmann's kerygmatic theology has of course been subsequently taken up and developed by his Schüller, Ebeling, with the notion of Wortgeschehen, and Fuchs, who prefers the idea of Sprachereignis. Bultmann's relative silence with regard to this particular development of his thought may suggest puzzlement rather than disapproval.

²The Historian and the Believer, pp. 143-144.

The second consequence is this: Bultmann's position further implies that faith must not be dependent upon historical research. However, if it is at least part of the business of historical criticism to distinguish what is true from what is false, then it is difficult to see how Christian faith can be wholly independent of it either. The aim of our final chapter will be to indicate in what way justice may be done to both.

Having said this, it must also be admitted that the complexity and sophistication of Bultmann's position with regard to our problem makes one hesitate before making final pronouncements on his views. The extent of the debt which we owe to him is already evident in the preceding chapters and this by itself would tend to make one hesitate all the more. Nevertheless, we consider that such criticisms as we have made are justified.

In the final chapter we shall attempt to integrate into our own conclusion some of the more compatible insights of Bultmann's position.

CONCLUSION

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In the course of this study we have attempted to present in as just and comprehensive outline as possible some of the current solutions to the complex problem of the relationship between history and eschatology. At the same time we have offered a critical evaluation of each of them in turn. To this extent our intention has been to examine and review in historical-critical fashion, not only the various ways in which this problem has been faced and answered, but also the way in which the problem itself has been further developed and re-shaped by the contributions of the different New Testament scholars who have been selected to occupy our attention.

It might be suspected that our discussion has at certain points tended to digress from the main theme. There are at least two reasons which might be offered to allay this suspicion. For one thing, our treatment of the problem has to some degree been determined by the different terms and contexts in which the writers we have referred to have themselves viewed it. This is why it has been necessary to formulate the principal problem of correlation in various ways. We have spoken of it as the problem of Jesus and ho Eschaton, history and eschatology, event and interpretation, and as the problem of the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, these being the terms most appropriate to the

positions adopted by the different scholars whose work we have been studying.

Nor has it been our intention to criticise, and least of all to belabour such solutions to the problem as have been offered from the elevated standpoint of a preconceived, definitive and final assumption about or definition of the nature of either history or eschatology. Nevertheless, we have had occasion to examine these positions against the background of the general principles outlined in Chapter Two above. It will be necessary to return to these in a moment.

There is however, a second closely related point which might be made in countering the possible objection that we have had occasion to digress. It concerns the fact that in relatively recent years the term eschatology has become much more flexible and has been given a much wider application than ever before.¹ Some would no doubt even be prepared to argue that its application has become so general that should anyone be possessed of the base desire to mystify his hearers or readers, then the word 'eschatology' more than any other term in contemporary theology, may be wholly relied upon to produce the desired effect. We have been able to study only a relatively small area of the whole range of its application, and to exhibit, compare and criticise some of the major differences between the ways in which it has been interpreted by some of the leading New Testament scholars of recent years.

If this at least may be safely said of eschatology, then much the same may be said of history as well. In fact in the whole spectrum of present-day theology it is becoming increasingly difficult to discover any

¹ See John McIntyre's remarks to this effect in his book, The Shape of Christology, p. 79.

firm critical consensus about either. This not necessarily regrettable lack of unanimity has been demonstrated above. And there also, wherever possible, we have attempted to show the extent to which each scholar's understanding of history has been shaped and determined by his view of eschatology or vice versa. In this way we have traced the development from Schweitzer to Bultmann and beyond. And in the light of this development we are able to view, and to some extent also account for, the very wide range of reference which the terms history and eschatology now possess.

Before going on to pursue the relevant implications of the general principles which we have sketched out in Chapter Two, it will be useful to recall and summarise some of the main difficulties which we have encountered in the different views which we have chosen to examine. After this brief exercise in reculer pour mieux sauter, we shall then be better placed to discover whether these difficulties can be overcome, and whether the position which we are seeking to defend may offer at least one way which will prove sufficient in enabling us to do so.

I

Basing his views on the work of Albert Schweitzer, Fritz Buri, as we have seen, concludes that the 'eschatological Christ-myth', or what might be termed the 'inside' of the Christ-event, retains its validity without reference to any historical check. It requires no confirmation in terms of its 'outside' or in terms of what historical research can discover about Jesus. The Christ-myth has the power to authenticate itself. On any other view, faith and history will meet only to collide violently with one another. This situation, Buri would claim, is one which faith finds intolerable. It is in order to avoid this situation that his position is specifically designed.

It is therefore unnecessary to search for any connection between Jesus and the Christ-myth, according to Buri, for such a quest is bound to produce only the kind of approximate and ambiguous conclusions which are sufficient to leave faith in a perpetual state of embarrassed insecurity.

We would agree with Buri that faith cannot be dependent upon the results of historical research in this sense. We would not agree, however, that historical research is wholly irrelevant to faith. Buri points out also that the possibility that authentic existence may be conferred or attained is always a present possibility. And clearly, it is by means of his understanding of the 'eschatological Christ-myth' that he manages to stress and secure this constantly contemporaneous reference. Our own emphasis on the way in which the past is present also enables us to go part of the way with Buri in this regard.

However, the journey together turns out to be relatively short. We discover that we must quickly part company with him when it is noted that his position firmly excludes any intrusion of the past at all. In contrast therefore to Buri, we would hold that it is Jesus who is the contemporaneous Eschatos. We would also wish to maintain that the name Jesus is not an empty cipher.

Buri's position can be maintained only at the expense of avoiding the question of whose name this is. This question once disposed of, eschatology is conveniently divorced from its connection with historical events and the Christ-myth thereby set free to stand by itself in a purer light.

There is however another side to Buri's position, for he does hint at a possible answer to this question of correlation. There can be

no doubt of its convenience and attraction. It may be noted, however, that his proposal again takes for granted the view that historical research must always be wholly at odds with faith. This immediately renders his position more vulnerable than it might appear on the surface. If our interpretation of Buri is correct, and if, as we have pointed out, there is a sense in which he does suggest that Jesus was the supreme instance among other lesser instances of authentic existence, then it is difficult to see how this Jesus could be said to be 'absolutely independent of historical knowledge'. If this is the case, then it would appear that Buri has left his position open to attack from the very kind of historical criticism which he takes to be normative, and from which faith, as he endeavours to show, must be kept immune.¹

Turning to C.H. Dodd, it is unnecessary to reiterate all the criticisms which we have made of the position which he adopts. We may, however, refer again briefly to two of the problems which have arisen from his understanding of history as 'occurrence plus meaning'.

Firstly, Dodd assumes that concerning the events of Jesus' life or 'the facts of the ministry of Jesus', there can be no disagreement or doubt. He also suggests that their eschatological meaning is as readily available to us as are these objective facts themselves. To return for a moment to the terminology of Chapter Two above, this is to say that their eschatological meaning or 'inside' may be read straight off the

¹ Van A. Harvey argues that Buri's position provides the rationale for the New Quest. Harvey's own criticism of the New Quest is that its proponents, among other things, regard faith as assent to historical propositions about Jesus' self-hood. Harvey seems to find Buri's view more acceptable. But if our analysis of Buri's position is correct, then against Harvey it must be said that it does not quite escape this dilemma either. See Harvey's The Historian and the Believer, pp. 196-200.

facts as such, the 'outside'. The consequence of this is that Dodd, as both Jüngel¹ and Bultmann² point out, tends to dissolve the 'inside' in the 'outside', or to reduce eschatology to history and possibly even to biography.

This leads to the second difficulty presented by Dodd's view. The criticism that Dodd regards all eschatology as exhaustively realised in the events of Jesus' life and ministry is one which has been made frequently enough. And although Dodd does defend himself against this objection with the somewhat belated and abrupt rejoinder that there is a residue of eschatology which denotes the element of 'sheer finality' still outstanding,³ it is difficult to see how he can render the two views consistent.

This lends the criticism a good measure of justification. It is unfortunate, however, that Dodd has not pursued some of the wider implications of the further eschatological reservation about realised eschatology. Had he done so, it might have been enough to suspend our own objection that while his position may do justice to the occurrence and meaning of Jesus' life and ministry as past occurrence and as past meaning, it does not quite succeed in doing justice to its significance for the present, to Jesus as the contemporaneous Eschatos, and to the conditions which enable us to recognise him as pre-eminently present to our own present. This is one of the main aspects of our whole problem, however, and it will be necessary for us to consider it again shortly.

¹ See Chapter Three above, p. 102.

² See Chapter Three above, pp. 107-108 and p. 116.

³ See Dodd's The Apostolic Preaching, p. 93.

We may now turn our attention to Cullmann. Once again, in order to avoid tiresome repetition, we shall offer only a short summary of the principal difficulties which we have encountered in the course of our discussion of his views. For our present purposes, these also may be reduced to two.

The first concerns the very fundamental distinction which he suggests should be made between event and interpretation. As we have already indicated, Cullmann's handling of this distinction determines his treatment of other important categories such as history and myth, history and salvation history, and history and revelation.

While he is willing to grant that in the interest of modern historical method such a basic distinction as this is required, we are nevertheless surprised to discover that he offers no further discussion about how or why it should be made.

Why then, we may ask, should Cullmann have granted this concession at all? It has to be said that we search his Salvation in History in vain for an unambiguous answer to this question. In due course however, some of our problems are finally resolved with the discovery that whenever Cullmann does apply the distinction to the New Testament material, he does so with the intention of demonstrating its inadequacy and inappropriateness to that material. We are reminded that the biblical witnesses themselves made no distinction of this kind. Since this is the case, we, and presumably the modern historian as well, must surrender it in the interest of 'aligning ourselves'.

Having in this way rendered the event-interpretation distinction innocuous, Cullmann is thus free to speak about Heilsgeschichte. The

difficulty is however, that his interpreter is left with no clear idea of what he understands by Geschichte, or even Historie. Nor, therefore, can it be very clear how the Heil and the Geschichte are related.

The second difficulty of Cullmann's view which is of importance for our theme also centres on the problem of the presence of the past. It might possibly be objected that this is a problem which Cullmann's position manages to exclude. Nevertheless, it is part of his intention to show that salvation history is a present and continuing reality, and that man is always in a situation in which he has the opportunity to choose to 'align himself' with it. In this form therefore, Cullmann's exposition certainly does raise the problem of the presence of the past.

Two questions present themselves in this connection. In the first place it is by no means clear whether salvation history, as Cullmann understands it, allows man any genuine choice at all, for as far as one may gather, the heilsgeschichtliche plan is already finished and complete. Or secondly, even if it is agreed that this view does permit decision, we may still wish to ask what more precisely it is that constitutes the object of our choice and at the same time elicits our choice. Is it a biblically-based linear ideology about the way things are and will be? Is it a heilsgeschichtliche panorama objectively distinguishable from all the other 'secular' histories in which, according to Cullmann, we participate? Or in the end is it simply the case that that which we are required to choose is a comprehensive and somewhat inflexible theory about biblical interpretation?

It would seem that all these answers are possible. The difficulty which we find with them is not so much that they are wholly unrelated or irrelevant to the question of the presence of the past.

It is rather that, contrary to Gullmann's own intention, they do conspire to obscure the fact of the determining presence of no Eschaton.

In any summary of the problems of Bultmann's position it is difficult to avoid misrepresentation and even caricature. Again, however, there are two principal issues which have to be considered.

The first concerns Bultmann's assertion that the kerygma requires only the Dass of Jesus' historicity. As we have seen, in order to make this point he is compelled to drop the distinction which he made between Historie and Geschichte. This enables him in turn to exclude the dimension of Geschichte in particular, so that the historisch-eschatologisch character of the paradoxical identity of the Christ-event may become clear.

One of the difficulties of this, as Bornkamm, Ebeling and others have pointed out, is that while the kerygma is the means by which the Christ-event is communicated, the event itself can be given no content. A further difficulty is that while Bultmann asserts the bare facticity of Jesus for the kerygma, at another level he is prepared to allow not only this, but also the facts that Jesus preached and that he was crucified. There would seem to be no essential difference between these additional facts and the 'mere That', yet from Bultmann's point of view, the kerygma does not require them. It is difficult to see, however, how the inclusion of these equally historisch facts would in any substantial way alter his view of paradoxical identity, nor is it exactly clear why Bultmann thinks it should.

This immediately leads to the second difficulty. Bultmann would hold that it is by means of the proclamation alone that the past is represented. The Word transforms the mere historical That into the eschatological That. In the situation of address and encounter these are

inseparably correlated in Jesus ho Eschatos, or, as Bultmann himself prefers to express it: ...'the Word of the Christian proclamation and the history which it communicates...are one'.¹

From a formal standpoint Bultmann's view on this matter has much to commend it. On analysis, however, it may be seen that this amounts to little more than a correlation of two abstractions, the That of Jesus' historicity, and the That of the kerygma. The point which we would wish to emphasise against Bultmann in this regard is therefore similar to one of our criticisms of Buri.² We would wish to stress the fact that it is Jesus who is the present Eschatos. If the name Jesus is reduced to a formal That, (the Dass being among other things a polite contraction of Bultmann's remark that this particular past event 'müßte gewesen sein wie es volle'),³ then it certainly does seem that revelation, as Bornkamm suggests, has the force of an apodictic decree.⁴

It is not intended that this summary and each of the preceding analyses should be regarded as destructive attacks on the courageous alternatives which have been put forward by others. Our purpose has been primarily to sift and clarify some of the principal issues which must inevitably come in for consideration when dealing with the fairly broad problem of the relation between history and ho Eschatos.

Nevertheless, these are some of the main problems of the different positions which we have chosen to discuss. Any constructive alternative

¹ Das Verhältnis, p. 27.

² See p. 194 of the present chapter.

³ Glauben und Verstehen, Vol. II, p. 16.

⁴ See Note 1, p. 183 above.

to these views will have to overcome these difficulties as far as possible.

The evidence might suggest that the possibilities for suggesting any alternative at all are wholly exhausted. This is not quite the case. However, at this stage, any proposals must of necessity be tentative and exploratory. In the light of the principles outlined in Chapter Two, our first task in putting forward any viable alternative position will be to consider the problem of historicity and risk.

II

In Chapter Two it was suggested that there is a reciprocity between the 'outside' and the 'inside' of historical events and persons, and that there can be no 'inside' without an 'outside'. This implies, therefore, that the view which we are seeking to defend involves a certain element of historical risk.

The view of the Consistent School is that the Jesus of history is the Jesus of the historically relative, apocalyptic-eschatological dogma. As such he must always be a complete stranger to any world which does not share this same cultural presupposition. This 'Jesus as he really was', has therefore no relevance for faith, and for the same reason he can never be the ground for our present judgements about ultimate reality. This must always be the case even despite the fact that the Consistent School can say a great deal about the historical Jesus. Its thorough-going eschatology is not to be equated with a thoroughgoing scepticism about the historical Jesus.

Buri, in his own way, extends some of the implications of this to include the fact that it is not only Jesus' strangeness to any world

or culture apart from his own that determines this conclusion. He goes even further to suggest that faith cannot find support in historical statements about Jesus, whether that Jesus is the Jesus of Consistent Eschatology or not.

Despite obvious differences, Bultmann displays his close proximity to Schweitzer and the Consistent School when he comes to a similar conclusion.

On these views, historical knowledge about Jesus is either recondite, or it is fragmentary, inconclusive and ambiguous. Those who hold them would doubtlessly further argue that this is so much the case that although faith may possibly involve eschatological risk, this can not and must not be confused with historical risk.

On the other hand, both Dodd and Gullmann in their different ways may be said to represent almost the opposite view. Their positions rest squarely on the presupposition that certain historical facts about Jesus can be objectively established. In any attempt to vindicate the truth of faith both would no doubt point to these facts as its essential ground. In this case there is a direct confirmation of the 'inside' by the 'outside'. The troublesome question as to whether research into the 'outside' could disprove the truth of the 'inside' is not raised in any serious way.

As we have seen, one of the consequences of this, to reverse one of Bultmann's celebrated remarks, is that eschatology is swallowed up in history.

The commitment of faith in this case becomes essentially a commitment to the proven results of historical research. It is in these results that both 'outside' and 'inside' are conflated. Neither an element of

historical risk, nor of eschatological risk need be involved, for to establish the 'facts of the ministry of Jesus' is to establish the fact that one 'ought' to commit oneself to them.

The first view is primarily determined by a willingness to admit a somewhat over-abrupt distinction between 'outside' and 'inside', between Jesus and the 'Christ-myth' (Buri), or between Jesus and the christological kerygma (Bultmann). The second view, on the other hand, allows the distinction to be dissolved too prematurely. Both Buri and Bultmann have therefore rendered themselves safe from the fiery darts of the historian. Whether Dodd and Cullmann would be prepared to admit it themselves is not particularly clear, but it may nevertheless be said that they are not.

This is also true of the view which is being defended here. However, it is not true in the same way. As long as faith involves commitment to an event or a person, as distinct from a myth or an idea, then it cannot ignore the problem of historicity. If this is the case, then Christian faith, understood as including commitment to Jesus as he Eschatos, cannot easily be alleviated of the burden of historical risk.

This enables us to distinguish our proposed alternative from the positions held by Bultmann and Buri. In what way may it be said to differ from those of Dodd and Cullmann?

It differs in at least two significant ways. For one thing, it differs to the extent that there are varying degrees of historical risk. There is, for example, a great deal of evidence to show that Jesus was crucified. By comparison, the evidence which might demonstrate that Jesus regarded himself as Messiah is much less abundant and more problematic.

Van A. Harvey makes a similar and very useful point in this connection. It is necessary to quote him at considerable length.

He writes:

'Take the familiar dictum "Christian faith cannot be dependent on the probabilities of historical research", a dictum that was accepted in essence if not in wording by Lessing, Kierkegaard, Herrmann, Kähler, and the dialectical theologians. This dictum is immediately countered by another one: "The Christian faith must take the full risk of the ambiguity of the historical". If our analysis is correct, both of these assertions are muddled. The thesis is confused because, as we have seen, all of our beliefs presuppose a knowledge of the past and are, in that sense dependent on historical enquiry. As Collingwood pointed out, there are historical components in all of our knowing...Since this is so, it would seem odd, indeed, if Christian belief did not depend on some historical knowledge...Even the "picture of Christ" in the New Testament, of which Kähler and Tillich speak as though it were independent of criticism, can be abstracted only by an act of historical imagination. And Bultmann's kerygma can be reconstructed only by a highly sophisticated process of historical reasoning.'

Harvey continues:

'The real issue, then, is not whether faith is independent of all historical criticism but whether Christian faith requires certain specific historical assertions that, in the nature of the case, are dubious or not fully justified. But if this is the issue, one must examine such assertions piecemeal. One must ask in each particular case what degree of certitude is warranted. Once we engage in such a procedure, we will immediately see why the counter-assertion "faith must take the full risk of the ambiguity of the historical" is so indiscriminating. The point is that some historical judgements are more at risk than others. It is one thing to stake one's faith on the veracity of the story of the three wise men, another on the messianic consciousness of Jesus, still another on his crucifixion. The first two beliefs require risks that are not entailed by the last. The dramatic call to take upon ourselves the full ambiguity of the historical conceals this important fact.'

These last points are especially important not only with regard to Buri and Bultmann and those other views which for their validity depend upon the quick and deliberate severance of faith and history. They are also

¹The Historian and the Believer, pp. 249-250.

important with regard to Dodd and Cullmann, who in their own way also make an attempt to exclude the element of historical risk entirely. The latter would argue that the factual material upon which their respective interpretations are based is to be discovered at the same historical level. It is derived from the one dependable, and historically most original stratum. And we may note in passing that they might possibly also find some support for maintaining this view from the source-critical recommendation that the safest rule to follow in all circumstances is that originality, (in the less usual sense of the word), means authenticity.

However, the principal consequence which they are disposed to draw from this, namely, that the quality of all the material so derived is the same, does not quite follow. To pursue the geological metaphor a little further, it has to be pointed out that the material drawn from the one seam need not be uniform. In other words, the various elements which merge to compose the Gospel story, as Dodd and Cullmann understand it, present themselves to us in such a way that our judgements of them need not be uniform either. Our judgement about some historical assertions may therefore be more certain than our judgements about others.¹

The blunt assertion, then, that faith must always be at the mercy of the historian requires this quite serious qualification. And the fact that in the nature of the case there will be different degrees of historical risk involved if faith calls for commitment to an event or a person, enables us to establish the first important and distinctive

¹Views which presuppose a 'minimal historical core' (or for that matter even a maximal historical core), are open to this kind of objection as well as to the objection that any such 'core' is really an abstraction. (See also below).

characteristic of a defensible alternative to the views discussed above. We shall return briefly to this question below.

III

There is, however, a second significant point, not unrelated to this, at which an alternative approach would differ from the positions we have questioned. It concerns the problem of correlation.

It follows from the suggestion made in Chapter Two that there is a mutual reciprocity between 'outside' and 'inside', and that this therefore requires the attempt to consider any event or occurrence together with its interpretation or its meaning.

'Brute facts' as distinct from meanings, 'naked events' as distinct from interpretations, or Historie as distinct from Geschichte are abstractions. Even the pious chronicler, frequently so much abused in theological circles, has some purpose in view when he records what may appear to many to be the most insignificant and undramatic facts. His record and his intention, however, need to be viewed, so to speak, synoptically. And although broad distinctions such as these may be initially useful for some purposes, it must be remembered that there is in fact no permanent and indelible line separating the one from the other. Nor should they be set in dualistic opposition to, or competition with one another.

Therefore, no matter how difficult it may be to shed this assumption, and however complex the consequences may prove to be, it is wrong to maintain that the perception of historical facts and events and their interpretation can be distinguished in this way. The one moment cannot be said to precede the other in temporal succession.

J.V. Langmead Casserley writes:

'...a fallacy is involved whenever we suppose that human cognition consists of a primitive act of pure perception which is succeeded in time, no doubt in a blindingly short instant or fraction of time, by an act of conjectural interpretation.'

And on the following page he continues:

'The perception of meaning is not subsequent to the recognition of physical fact but coincidental with it. Pure perception, the mere apprehension of totally uninterpreted physical actualities, is an abstraction which, so far as human beings are concerned, is never known to occur.'¹

It would be unfair to suggest that the respective positions adopted by Dodd and Cullmann necessarily involve a rigid dualism of the kind which Casserley is criticising. Nor do either of them by any means espouse a positivistic view of history.

Nevertheless, in both cases, their views rest upon the more tacit than explicit assumption that interpretation is always subsequent to the initial establishment of a certain quantity of neutral historical data. This is one of the implications of Dodd's definition of history as 'occurrence plus meaning, (emphasis mine), and of Cullmann's references to the apparent purity of 'naked events', (nackten Ereignisse). It must be objected, however, that there is no such thing as an original, uninterpreted historical deposit which could possibly serve as an agreed and common starting-point for different historians, and more particularly, for biblical interpreters, to work upon. Nor is it of much help to insist that all biblical interpretation simply must presuppose the existence of a historical core of this kind if anything is to be interpreted at all, as Cullmann in particular tends to do. This applies not only

¹ See his somewhat neglected book, Toward a Theology of History, pp. 134-135, and p. 136.

to Cullmann. Others are also quick to posit the existence of a basic quantity of historical Urstoff. However, few, if any, are as quick to define it.

This has at least one important consequence for the present discussion. It may best be illustrated from the area of personal relationships. The analogy of marriage has not yet quite disappeared under the weight of all the significance which it is often called upon to bear, and it is in any case the one best suited to our purposes.

The movement toward commitment in marriage is extremely complex. It is shaped, however, to some degree, by the mutual coincidence of the desire of the prospective partners to know, and the desire to know about the other. From both sides there is an interest in the other's background, in childhood impressions, attitudes to parents, friends, teachers, and so on. From these, and from countless other apparently outward and disparate elements, an image of the other as a self or as a person is gradually built up.

The selfhood of the other, however, is not finally reducible to any one or even to all of these elements taken together. One important reason for this is that the desire of the one to know about the other is determined and controlled primarily by the desire to know who the other is. The selfhood of the other, who the other is, transcends knowledge about him. The moment, therefore, or moments, of responsible commitment are most properly understood as the singularly fitting and appropriate responses to the other as a self or person in his or her own right.

On the other hand, marriage, we are reminded is not something to be 'entered upon lightly'. Therefore, the decision not to commit oneself, or 'not to go ahead with it', in order to be equally responsible, is also one which should be made on the same basis.

If the preceding analysis is correct, then it may be said that commitment to Jesus as ho Eschatos is analogous to this. History and christology, or Jesus and ho Eschatos are not mutually exclusive.

This means that Bultmann's christological kerygma, (while clearly possessing other qualities and characteristics), regarded as a response, must therefore be judged to be somewhat inadequate and inappropriate if it is regarded simply as the response to the blessed Pass of Jesus' historicity. The 'Christ-myth' of Buri, on the other hand, is alleged to function most effectively in history's absence. Nor can Dodd's 'meaning' or Cullmann's 'interpretation' be considered wholly adequate as long as the source of meaning, or that which is to be interpreted, is regarded on the one hand as a series of neutral and uninterpreted occurrences, or on the other, as a loose sequence of 'naked events'.

It is rather the case that the response to Jesus as ho Eschatos is a response to his person. It is a fitting and appropriate response not only to what Jesus said and did, but to who he was.

It may therefore be said that Jesus and ho Eschatos meet in the mysterious and profound oneness of Christ's person to solicit and evoke an appropriate, corresponding commitment. The fitting commitment of faith is not to be equated tout court with assent to historical propositions. Nor is it simply an intellectual assent. In both instances this would be somewhat similar to the attitude of those who at the cross 'stood beholding'.¹ It is rather the active commitment of a self to the one in whom selfhood and agency are peculiarly united. Recalling Gadamer's metaphor, we may say that the 'horizons' of history and eschatology are

¹Luke, 23:35.

not separate or confused. They 'melt' in the depth of the unity of his self to constitute the paradigmatic disclosure of God's historical care. The appropriate response is therefore not that of the 'beholders'. It is more like that of the centurion, who was able to say, 'Truly, this was the son of God'.¹

It has been suggested that however difficult it may be to detect any form of correlation between Jesus and ho Eschatos, some form of correlation there must be if we are to avoid some of the more serious consequences of positing a radical and violent discontinuity between them.

These consequences are of course manifold. As we have seen, from a standpoint such as that taken by Fritz Buri, for instance, it might be argued that since the significance of the 'Christ-myth' may be affirmed at the expense of history, then the problem of correlation is altogether illusory. The positions of Dodd, Gullmann and Bultmann have also been found to be inadequate with regard to this problem. Other views also make a point of avoiding it. In the now not so currently popular work of the Death of God theologians, the problem of correlation is also regarded as the one which must first be rejected. A further very wide range of views is also to be discovered, if not in the light, then perhaps in the shade of Franz Overbeck's remark that 'if it is history it is not Christianity, and if it is Christianity it is not history'.² There can be no doubt that theology has profited immensely from the breathtaking audacity of the Either-Or. It is nevertheless equally true that it has also suffered under its tyranny.

¹Matt., 27:54. (If the translation should read 'a son of God' this would not affect the point of the illustration.)

²Reference to this can be found in Karl Barth's Theology and Church, Shorter Writings, 1920-28, p. 61.

The power of its dictatorship may be exemplified. Where the problem of correlation is judged illusory, or when it is asserted that it is either unnecessary or impossible to discover a connection between Jesus and ho Eschatos, then, generally speaking, faith tends to become one of two things.

It is either equated with assent to what the critical historian can discover and affirm about Jesus, or it is left to bid history a glad and speedy farewell. In the latter case, it is no less tragic that, like Mallory and Irving, whose last gestures were by far the more courageous, faith should then mount the high slopes of a cold and clouded Everest and be seen no more.

To formulate the problem in this way is therefore quite misleading. The appropriate response in which Jesus is recognised as ho Eschatos involves neither the wholesale negation of history for the sake of eschatology, nor are we required wholly to negate eschatology in favour of history. It is certainly extremely difficult to steer a straight course between these broad alternatives. Nevertheless, a course of the kind we have suggested is the one which must be taken if the rocks on to which these alternatives would force us are to be evaded.

It is not being suggested that the problem of correlation in the form in which we are examining it can be solved completely. In order to achieve this we should have to leave the limitations of our human situation completely behind. On the other hand, if we start from the assumption that history and eschatology are two independent, distinct, and even competitive entities, then it can be safely said that we shall never even begin to find a solution to this problem at all.

We have, however, endeavoured to point in another direction.

This alternative calls for openness and expectancy in and toward our selves. It also requires precisely the same attitude to other selves, for no man can be a self by himself. In the person of Jesus ho Eschatos, we catch a glimpse of an integrity and a wholeness which are not our own. This wholeness transcends yet does not exclude our common selfhood. The self in its fragmented capacity as historical thinker will 'stand beholding'. In its role as speculative thinker it will remain at an unexpected distance. However, to the self as agent, the opportunity is given to respond and to co-respond with its own equally mysterious wholeness and integrity. This is the singularly fitting and appropriate response to the claim which arises to encounter us in the Last One. The problem of correlation would indeed be illusory if the opportunity and possibility to respond in this way were not given.

In this personal meeting, man realises that of himself he is unable to complete his own life, and that he can neither fully define nor fulfil its mystery. There is also a real sense in which he is reduced to despair. However, it is the healthy despair which comes with the awareness that the resolution and fulfilment of the mystery not only does not lie within himself, for he realises also that it is not to be found in a dependence upon any absolutised, impersonal penultimate either. But at the same time this is precisely his liberation, his being set free to discover where the fulfilment of the mystery is to be found. He is thus grasped by, and is enabled to grasp, that which he is 'not yet'. This is not the theoretical solution of a puzzle. He receives his fulfilment at once as a total gift and as a total task.

This is very well expressed by David E. Jenkins. He writes:

'The pattern and purpose which encourages and fulfils personalness must transcend the processes of materiality and the pattern of history or it is their fragmentariness, unfinishedness and impersonalness which must be determinative. Jesus Christ, however, makes it clear that the last word and the ultimate hope lies with the emergent pattern of personalness, because these immanent developments are the intimate concern of the transcendently personal. So we are to see the reality of man in the light of the direction in which he is developing, a direction of ever increasing possibilities of freedom, openness, and involvement with the potentialities both of the universe at large and of human beings among themselves.'¹

To this it might only be added and emphasised that 'the direction in which (man) is developing' constitutes the task. The 'personalness' of ho Eschatos which is other and yet akin to man's own, defines its beginning and end. In this sense it may therefore be said that Jesus ho Eschatos is also the open question to man,² recalling and encouraging him toward 'freedom, openness, and involvement with the potentialities both of the universe at large and of human beings among themselves'.

IV

We have suggested that there is a mutual reciprocity between the 'inside' and the 'outside' of historical events, between fact and meaning and between event and interpretation. This is also true of the paradigmatic event of Jesus Christ.

With regard to what we have already said about the character of the Christ-event as paradigmatic,³ and to the problem of historical risk touched upon above, two questions still remain. Once again it is a

¹The Glory of Man, p. 95.

²See Chapter Two, pp. 42-43 above.

³See Chapter Two, pp. 37-43 above.

relatively easy matter to raise them but considerably more difficult to answer them satisfactorily.

The first question is generally raised by those who would wish to argue that there must be an 'infinite qualitative difference' between history and eschatology. In the recognition that Jesus is ho Eschatos a resolute leap is inevitably involved so that history may be negated. A great deal of contemporary theology has been strongly influenced by this view. In its more vehement forms it is coloured by the understandable fear that ho Eschatos should be regarded as part of the world. On the other hand, some of the most recent theological alternatives to this have tended to be the fruit of an over-reaction not so much to its underlying historical scepticism as to its historical pessimism. It is possibly the case, however, that this particular persuasion will always continue to exist in one strong form or another. It is in relation to this that our alternative requires some further clarification.

With this view, the problem of an abrupt discontinuity is again re-introduced with a vengeance. We may frame the leading question of its exponents in a slightly different way. If Jesus is ho Eschatos, then does it not follow that there is no historical means with the help of which this particular event may be grasped or made intelligible? If there is no such means, then what grounds can one possibly have for saying that this is an intelligible event at all?

A tentative answer to this question begins to emerge from our earlier discussion of the nature of formative or paradigmatic events.

Paradigmatic events, it has been argued, have a constant presence. There is a sense in which they impose themselves upon the present. This imposition is not necessarily arbitrary or dictatorial, for they impose

themselves in terms of the claim which they bear and which is integral to them.

Van A. Harvey speaks of 'categories' rather than claims. However, the following passage will help to clarify this point. Harvey writes:

'To say that certain events impose their own categories is to say that these events have the power to demand a consideration on their own terms, so to speak, that there are some ways of interpreting them less eccentric than others. They intrude certain questions and images upon us because they seem to touch human experience and feeling at some primordial level. They speak to our hopes and fears. Consequently, they provide us with the symbols and parables for the interpretation of our existence.'¹

Paradigmatic events of this kind may therefore be said to impose the claims or categories by means of which these events are most adequately and appropriately interpreted. Again we may take up Collingwood once again rather than Harvey. A slight shift of meaning may be introduced into Collingwood's notion of the 'inside' of historical events. This is required if we are to overcome to some extent some of the very difficult problems which arise specifically in connection with Collingwood's equation of 'inside' with the motives or intentions behind historical events and actions. By shifting this emphasis it may therefore be said that such paradigmatic events present themselves to us in terms of the categories which are internal or intrinsic to themselves. Our interpretation of them should therefore involve a fitting and appropriate co-response.

For instance, we interpret Machiavelli in political rather than in psychological terms. This is not to say that his life would not provide a fruitful hunting-ground for the Freudian, or that a biography

¹The Historian and the Believer, p. 254.

of Machiavelli written from some other psychological point of view would be totally impossible. Nor does it mean that such a biography could tell us virtually nothing at all about him. However, as involving something of a 'category mistake', or, perhaps better, a category evasion, such an interpretation might justifiably be judged to be somewhat inappropriate in permitting the category most integral to that event either to be submerged, or to appear to be merely peripheral and incidental to it.

Further, if it is the case that paradigmatic events impose their own intrinsic categories with the help of which they are most appropriately interpreted, then one possibly serious objection to the view of history which is being defended here may also be met.¹ If such events impose categories intrinsic to themselves and are in this way creative of the dialogical reciprocity to which we have referred, then our interpretation and understanding of them, and our response to them will not be merely a matter of personal taste or inclination. This would therefore render the view of history being adopted here at least relatively safe from the charge that it is necessarily committed to a view which is wholly arbitrary and subjective.

It might still, however, be objected that as eminently distinct from all other historical events, and with specific regard to the 'things concerning Christ', we are in the nature of the case necessarily involved in a metabasis eis allo genus. The available set of categories must be exchanged for another, for his nature as ultimate is not something which can be historically deduced or derived. There are, therefore, it might be argued, no given categories by means of which we may apprehend him as

¹See Chapter Two, p.34 above.

ho Eschaton. And, it may further be objected that the attempt to employ any category or categories in the effort to make this event intelligible constitutes an act of 'unfaith' since by doing so we implicitly deny ho Eschaton the right to transcend them. What we are therefore confronted with in fact is an Either-Or in and about which there must be no confusion: either the transcendence of ho Eschaton is a transcendence of exclusion and negation, or it is a transcendence of undialectical inclusion and affirmation which is in fact no transcendence at all. We therefore simply have to make the choice of the one or the other. We must make the leap of faith.

There are two basic objections to this kind of argument. These have already been hinted at. First of all, as has been said often before, we may leap in the light or we may leap in the dark. If the recognition of Jesus as ho Eschaton does involve a leap, however, then it is not one which is taken in empty darkness. It takes place rather against the inescapable background of a situational context, and our various decisions and recognitions can never be wholly independent of or discontinuous with that context. Nor can they be entirely accounted for apart from it. If we could do so, then again, we should have transcended the human situation completely, leaving it to its own devices.

At its highest and best, our situational frame of reference is constituted by personalness, as we have already indicated above. It is within this framework that Jesus is recognised as ho Eschaton. He is never wholly absorbed or comprehended within this context, for he is at once both the fulfilment and the constant question to our own personalness. Nevertheless, we can say that he is apprehended within it in the fitting response to his personal claim.

The contention, then, that we must choose either history or eschatology is therefore mistaken and misleading. This leads to a second objection to this view. Neither the way of negation and exclusion, nor the way of one-sided affirmation and inclusion are by themselves at all adequate or satisfactory solutions to the problem we are seeking to illuminate, for on either view, the essential dialogic (or dialectic) of history is made to grind to a somewhat violent and shuddering halt.

We have to say, therefore, that it is only if no Eschaton can be regarded as the open question to history and to my history that this dialogical movement can be preserved. At the same time, the apprehension of Christ's personalness as fulfilment and as question neither leaves the world as it is nor ourselves as we are. Our commitment to the claim of his personalness will also determine our attitude and the form of our response to every other claim. In the light of such commitment it can also therefore be said that every other historical claim is not merely given its right to be interpreted on its own terms. It is also given the right to be judged insofar as it may be an arbitrary, imperious and impersonal claim. Only from the point of view of the personal can the right to interpret, on the one hand, and the right to judge on the other, be genuinely regarded as rights at all.

These rights are given also to a Machiavelli. As the open question to history Christ suspends the claim to ultimacy of every other historical claim in favour of openness, freedom, in short, in favour of personalness. The recognition that Jesus is the Last One does not therefore involve the exchange of one set of categories for another. Least of all does it involve their exchange for none at all. It rather

involves their transformation in the light of all that makes for personalness. Our speaking politically about Machiavelli can therefore never be final, especially as seen in the light not of one paradigm among others, but in the light of the last paradigm.

The final paradigm of personalness which can determine our attitudes and our responses to all other historical paradigms and claims is constantly present and before us. As a history which transcends history it is never merely past. In this paradigm 'outside' and 'inside' concur and coincide in evoking the response and commitment to who Jesus is. There is therefore no absolute distinction between historical risk and final or eschatological risk.

Kierkegaard was right to point out that there is no such thing as the disciple at second hand. Two thousand years later we are at no disadvantage. If it is given to us to catch a glimpse of 'Jesus as he really is', as he Eschatos, then it is wrong to suggest that we can never know 'Jesus as he really was'.

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